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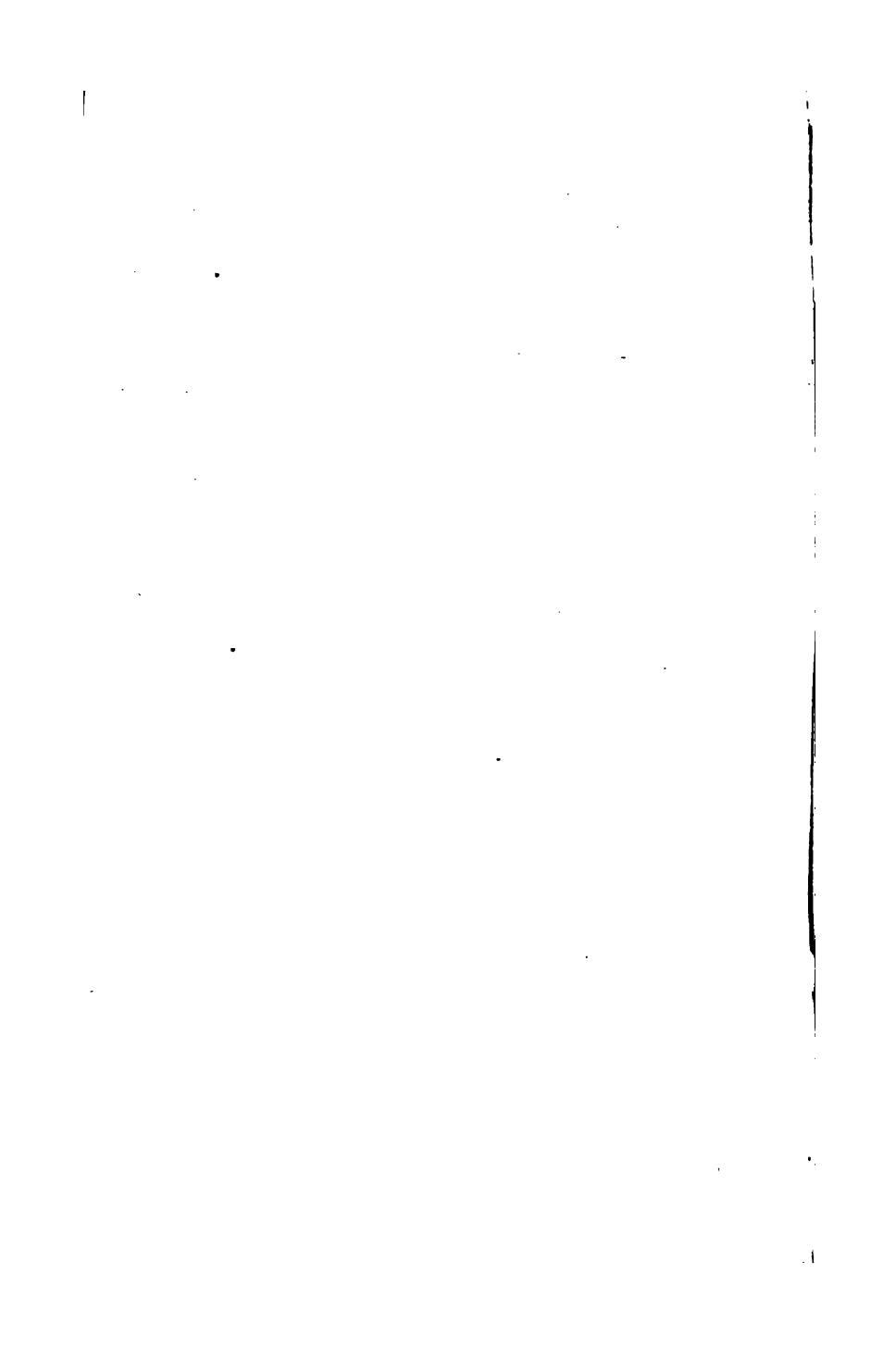
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THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST THE POWER OF GOD
UNTO SALVATION:

EXEMPLIFIED IN

THE PREACHING AND WRITINGS

OF

The Apostle Paul.

IN TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS.

BY THE

REV. W. A. NEWMAN, M. A.,

CURATE OF ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH,
WOLVERHAMPTON.

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto
salvation to every one that believeth."—Rom. i. 16.



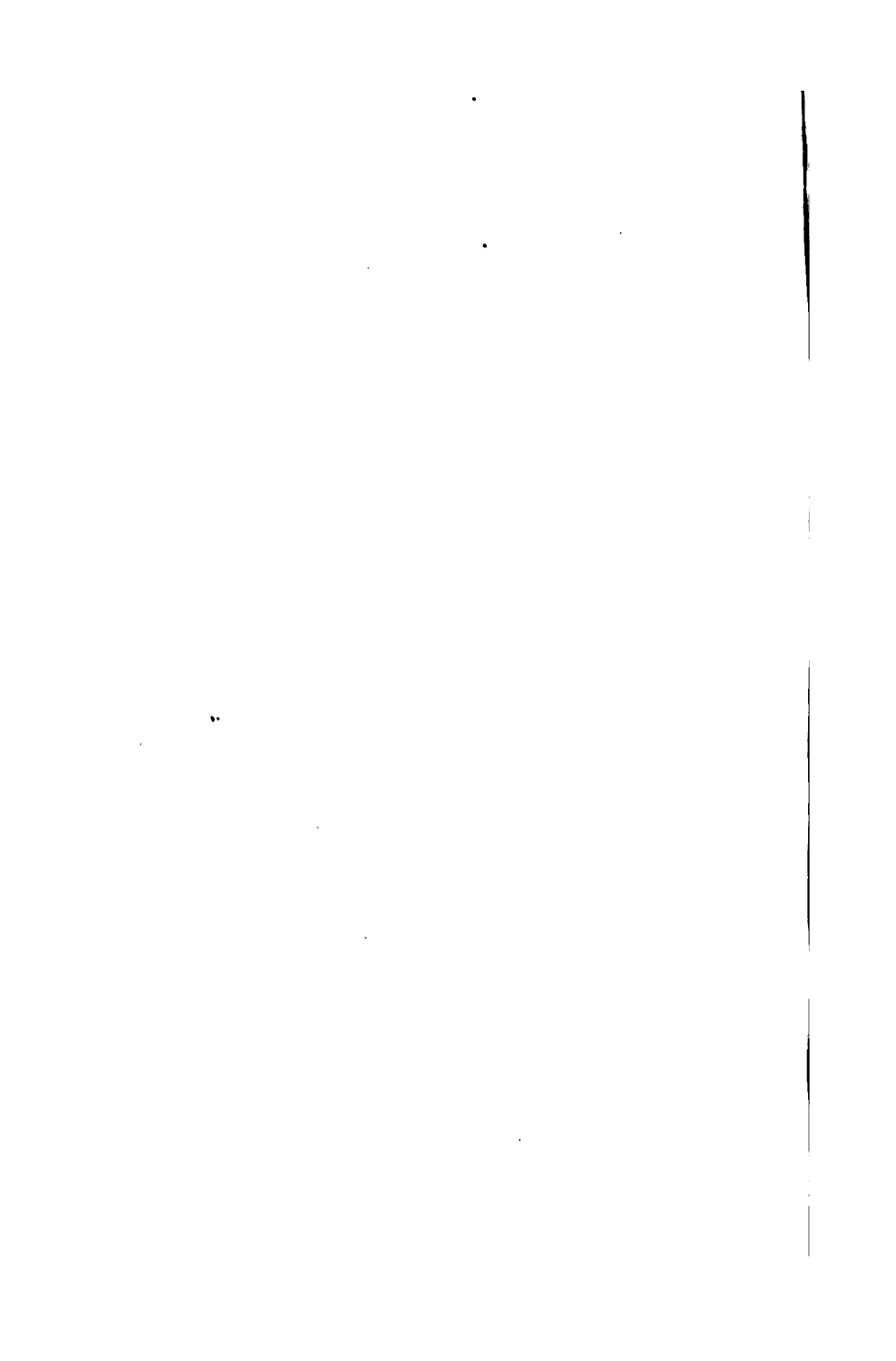
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ADVERTISEMENT.

A few words will suffice to explain the cause of the publication of this Volume. It was my intention that it should have appeared at the opening of the present year, as a token of Ministerial esteem and attachment to the Members of St. George's Church, Wolverhampton. But receiving, whilst engaged in its preparation, the appointment to the Chaplaincy of Cape Town, I thought it advisable to defer its completion till the present period, when I could more suitably leave it as a parting memorial to a Congregation, for which I shall always feel the warmest interest, and most sincere spiritual love. The volume has no pretensions, but if it be blest by the Divine Spirit, to claim the serious attention of the undecided, to impart a ray of hope to any in affliction, or to animate and encourage to the exercise of Christian duties, great will be my joy and thankfulness. I commend it, and those to whom for the last ten years I have ministered, to God's grace, with the very humble belief that in it, as in my ministrations, I can acquit my heart with the consciousness that—"I have not shunned to declare all the counsel of God."

DEANERY, WOLVERHAMPTON,
February 9th, 1848.

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION.

THE PREACHER OF THE CROSS.

"THEY heard . . . that he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me."—GAL. i. 23, 24. PAGE 1

ILLUSTRATION I.

THE LISTENING HEART, THE OPENED HEART.

"AND a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."—ACTS xvi. 14. PAGE 17

ILLUSTRATION II.

THE BRAND PLUCKED FROM THE BURNING.

"THEN he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"—ACTS xvi. 29, 30.
PAGE 37

ILLUSTRATION III.

THE SCRIPTURE SEARCHERS.

"THESE were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so."—ACTS xvii. 11. PAGE 57

ILLUSTRATION IV.

GOD UNKNOWN AND WORSHIPPED IN IGNORANCE.

"THEN Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown God;' whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you."—Acts xvii. 22, 23.

PAGE 79

ILLUSTRATION V.

THE CORINTHIAN HEART MADE THE TEMPLE OF GOD.

"KNOW ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."—1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. PAGE 103

ILLUSTRATION VI.

WORLDLY GAIN AN OPPOSITION TO THE GOSPEL.

"AND the same time there arose no small stir about that way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands: so that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth."—Acts xix. 23—27.

PAGE 123

ILLUSTRATION VII.

THE WRIGHT OF PRESENT SUFFERING LIGHTENED BY
THE GOSPEL.

"I RECKON that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."—Rom. viii. 18. PAGE 145

ILLUSTRATION VIII.

THE GLORY TO BE REVEALED.

"I RECKON that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."—Rom. viii. 18. PAGE 169

ILLUSTRATION IX.

THEY WHO SEEK ME EARLY SHALL FIND ME.

"FROM a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."—2 Tim. iii. 15. PAGE 191

ILLUSTRATION X.

THE BELIEVING HUSBAND AND BELIEVING WIFE.

"WHAT knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?"—1 Cor. vii. 16. PAGE 211

ILLUSTRATION XI.

THE CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

"THE church that is in their house."—Rom xvi. 5. . . PAGE 233

ILLUSTRATION XII.

THE FUGITIVE SLAVE MADE AN OBEDIENT SERVANT
TO CHRIST.

"PERHAPS he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord."—PHILEM. 15, 16.

PAGE 257

GENERAL CONCLUSION.

DESIGN OF THE GOSPEL.

"THIS is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."—1 JOHN v. 11—13.

PAGE 277

"O GOD, WHO THROUGH THE PREACHING OF THE BLESSED APOSTLE SAINT PAUL, HAST CAUSED THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL TO SHINE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD; GRANT, WE BESEECH THEE, THAT WE HAVING HIS WONDERFUL CONVERSION IN REMEMBRANCE, MAY SHOW FORTH OUR THANKFULNESS UNTO THEE FOR THE SAME, BY FOLLOWING THE HOLY DOCTRINES WHICH HE TAUGHT; THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN."

Collect—Conversion of St. Paul.

ERRATUM—Page 93, for “parodox” read paradox.

INTRODUCTION.

THE PREACHER OF THE CROSS.

"THEY HEARD THAT HE WHICH PERSECUTED US IN TIMES PAST, NOW PREACHETH THE FAITH WHICH ONCE HE DESTROYED. AND THEY GLORIFIED GOD IN ME."—Gal. i. 23, 24.

THERE was seen, some eighteen centuries since, passing throughout the most renowned and polished cities, a stranger, a little below the average stature of the times, with marked Jewish features, of weak bodily presence, a frame somewhat bowed with travel and hardship, and limbs bearing the marks of scourging, and many a trace of violence and the dungeon-chain. Yet one could discern a zeal and holy fervor on his brow which told it was no mere human impulse which constrained him. He usually wended his way to the humblest quarters of the towns through which he passed, or if the scattered remnants of Israel were to be found therein, resorted with them to their synagogues. And there he spake with full and glowing words—and as he spake all were fain to listen; they hung on his lips—they wondered at the new and strange

doctrines which fell from him—their hearts were moved and troubled—and mostly so because he proclaimed a Name which they were taught to hold accursed. And when those synagogues broke up, which they oftentimes did in uproar, many followed that mysterious man, talked with him in his retirement, believed, and were baptized. That stranger was the apostle Paul—the name and theme on which he ever spoke was Jesus Christ and Him crucified; and they who believed and were baptized were those whom “the Lord added to the church daily, that they might be saved.”

In this, as in an introductory lecture, I shall speak on the most striking parts of the *character* of this remarkable man and his preaching; and then review such instances of the success of his apostleship and ministry as will evidence that the Gospel, which he compassed sea and land to preach, was “the power of God unto salvation.”

The most prominent marks of Paul’s character are his zeal, perseverance, and devotedness. These, whilst he was under the Law, influenced him “after the most straitest sect of his religion to live a Pharisee;” and these—when by the grace of God he was called to be an apostle—with yet holier and increased impulse inspired him to labor more abundantly than all the apostles; and to “count

all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord."

In proof of his zeal—as a young, enthusiastic Jew, we find him fondly supposing that he *ought* to do many things against the name of the crucified Nazarene; and, thinking he was doing God service, "making havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committing them to prison, and being exceeding mad against them persecuting them even to strange cities." Another time we behold him watching, with bigot rejoicing, the clothes of those who stoned the heavenly-minded Stephen; and at length breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, carrying the commission of the high priest to the remote city of Damascus, that "*if* he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem." But how rectified! how exalted was that zeal when it was pressed into the *true* service of God! What led Paul with unshrinking heart into every city, though he knew that there bonds and imprisonment awaited him? What led him at one time over the burning sands of the wilderness, and at another to the bleak confines of Pontus? What kept his spirit from drooping within him in the dark dungeon of Philippi, and what during the storm

and the stress of weather, as "he was driven up and down in Adria, and when neither sun nor stars for many days appeared?" What prompted him at Ephesus to proclaim against the idolatry to Diana, and what at Athens to confront that superstition which worshipped an Unknown God? What led him to alarm Felix with righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; and what to ask Agrippa with a holy boldness—"King Agrippa, believest thou the Scriptures?" His zeal for Christ; his ardor to proclaim His name to Jew and Gentile; his readiness to bear about in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus, to die daily, and amid perils and persecutions, and hunger, and cold, and nakedness, to let none of these things move him, nor to count his life dear to himself, "so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

Nor was Paul's perseverance less signal than his zeal. The latter is, in many, a mere momentary impulse—a power bent to its utmost tension, but whose elasticity is soon spent, and whose energy is soon broken. Like the ardent outpouring of a lava-stream, it wastes the very chambers of the heart from which it flows. But not so the fervor of the apostle Paul. It was *zeal* in

its *intenseness*, but *perseverance* in its *continuance*. His heart was like the bush before Moses, it burnt, and burnt brightly and miraculously, but was not consumed; like the fire which of old was consecrated in the temple to God, it was lit from heaven, and like that fire was continually kept alive. We read of Moses burdened and heart-bowed by the murmurings of Israel, repining that he led them from Egypt—of Elijah dispirited, sinking beneath the juniper tree, despairing, and imploring “Now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers,” because, as he imagined, he and he only was left, and they sought his life to take it away—of Ezekiel exclaiming, because the rebellious houses of Israel and Judah would not hear him, “Ah, Lord God, they say of me, doth he not speak parables!”—and of Jonah sitting down vexed in spirit, and displeased exceedingly, because God repented of his fierce anger against Nineveh when her six score thousand humbled themselves in sackcloth and ashes. But we trace no discouragement in the spirit of Paul. As patriotic as Moses, he could wish himself “accursed from Christ for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh;” yet when they league in oath against his life, there is no murmuring against them, no provoking of his spirit, no speaking unadvisedly with his lips.

When he is stoned from one city, scourged in another, and imprisoned in the drear, damp dungeon of a third, he does not implore to die, though in danger and suffering he was dying daily. When his words are set at nought he is not discouraged, but bears the same faithful saying to other cities. And far from arrogating to himself honor as a prophet and apostle of the Lord, he was willing to be accounted a fool for Christ's sake! For thirty years he bore about in his body the cross of Christ; for thirty years he was familiar with persecution on the land, and perils on the deep; for thirty years he was defamed, evil-intreated, and betrayed by false brethren; for thirty years he was a wanderer, without any certain dwelling-place; for thirty years, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus, he never left his watch-post, and never sheathed the sword; for thirty years he pressed forward in the race for the prize of the high calling of God, still reaching toward the mark. Yet for the whole thirty years we trace no faltering of heart—no flagging of zeal—no halting as in weariness; as bold, as energetic, as firm, as full of trust and purpose when he stood a bowed and prematurely-bent old man in Nero's palace, as when with all the fire of a new convert he confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that Jesus was the very Christ.

But we must not pass unnoticed the *devotedness* of Paul. It was his main characteristic. What he did, he did with all his being. He brought the great powers of his mind—the burning earnestness of his heart, the untired energies of his spirit—the exalted fervency of his soul—all to bear on the great work to which he was called. Paul's was no half service—there was no divided interest with him. The sacrifice which he offered of himself, was a *whole burnt sacrifice*! Instant in season and out of season; never discouraged; heeding not distance or peril—his heart embraced every work of labor and love for the Lord's sake. What did he not forego, when he resolutely took up the cross? He gave up opinions, rank, esteem, ease, worldly honor, all things which men hold dear! And what did he not undertake, when he resolutely took up the cross? He exposed himself to malice, to evil insinuations, to surmises, to the hatred of all men, to reviling, to be accounted the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things. But none of these things moved him. He had one work—to make known the unsearchable riches of Christ; and he had one whole and undivided heart to this work, and that he offered constantly a living sacrifice unto God; and if ever man did God's work on earth as the angels do it

in heaven—that man was Paul. He did it readily, he did it sincerely, he did it fervently, he did it devotedly.

And whence arose this devotedness of the Apostle's character? His mind was filled with the most ennobling conceptions. His unearthly spirit seemed to drink in such lofty ideas of God's love and purpose in Christ, that he was lost to all besides. The immense theme his soul surveyed was God's unbounded sovereignty; and gazing entranced and wondering at this—as the musing mind contemplates the far-stretching vastness of the ocean—his astonished exclamation was, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." Paul's conversation was in heaven; his country—the better country which he sought—was there. He considered his light afflictions, which were but for a moment, as working out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. His eye was fixed not on the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen. Futurity's dark veil was upraised for him. He scanned the vistas of eternity. He was vouchsafed a glimpse of its glorious revelations when he was caught up into the third heaven—and its crown of glory, and its regions

incorruptible, and its buildings not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens, filled his thoughts. And thus animated, and pressing forward for the prize of his high calling, how could he be otherwise than earnest? His hope was of that high standard that it called forth diligence and devotedness, sacrificing all to God, "that through faith and patience he might inherit the promises."

Such was the Apostle's character; and animated by, and colored from it, was his style of preaching. Earnest, bold, faithful—his language fell not from his lips merely, but sprung with unrestrained feeling from his heart. An ambassador for Christ, he knew that his embassy brooked not delay, and therefore with mind, and soul, and spirit, he implored those to whom he addressed himself to be reconciled to God. In all things he approved himself—not for self-seeking, a pleaser of men—but, a minister of God, "by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth." Well instructed in the law—familiar with the learning of the refined Greeks—a close reasoner—a rhetorician not from art but from nature—an orator not from rule but from feeling—skilled in the words which man's wisdom taught—and possessed by revelation of such things as it was not lawful for

man to utter—he was especially furnished with all that was necessary to arouse, to persuade, to convince, to animate, to gain the hearts and the souls of those who heard him. His speech was with power. His accusers were silenced. His judges trembled; astounded at his wisdom and his ardency, those who tried him deemed him an enthusiast, and that “too much learning had driven him mad!” As he preached, conjurors burned their books; exorcists abjured their craft; demoniacs, turning their spirit of divination against their masters, cried “This man is the servant of the most high God, and showeth unto us the way of salvation.” His deportment was a sermon; his doctrine conviction; his earnestness persuasion; his eloquence inspiration; his truth power. The court of Areopagus had rung to the spirit-stirring declamations of Demosthenes, but never had those walls echoed to such words of fervor, such eloquent truths, such glowing revealments, such elevating wisdom, and such divine utterings, as when Paul, standing there, addressed the Athenians in the well-known *designation* of their own orator, “*Ye men of Athens!*” Nor could his own infuriate countrymen resist the laudable artifice of his speaking, when perceiving that the council was divided in sentiment, he availed himself of their known tenacity to their

sect, by exclaiming "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee . . . of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." Of the success of his preaching, the consecutive lectures will be an illustration, but we must not conclude the present introduction before deducing from what has been said, wherein Paul is an eminent example.

I.—He is an eminent example for his *heavenly-mindedness*. His soul was far, far away. His affections were set upon things above. His heart was in heaven, and heaven was in his heart! The world in which his spirit lived, was the world unseen. Just as an exile from his father-land stands on some far-off shore, and, when the sinking sun tinges with its golden beams the cloud-islands in the west, fondly dreams that he sees in them his own country and his own shore, till recollection has half the substance, and half the influence of reality—so the Apostle, a stranger and a pilgrim, looked ever across the billows of time between him and his home, and oft entranced by faith, which was indeed to him the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen, felt himself *absent* from the *body*, and present with the Lord. And what a treasure has the man who has heaven thus in his heart! And how strong is he, in that victory which overcometh the world, whose heart

is thus in heaven. The longings and aspirations of our *souls* are boundless—the limits of time are too narrow, too circumscribed for them—they yearn for the eternal. When rightly attracted they tend to the God-source from whence they emanated. They are isolated and restless, and out of course, whilst they merely flutter about temporal and fleeting things. Like the fabled Paradise-birds, they cannot rest upon the earth, their sphere is heaven. But faith expands the heart; it is the soul's optic glass, enabling us to look into the skies—to pierce the depths of the immeasurable—and to find that there are scenes and bright regions there to which this world is but a mote, and the greatest glory here is but darkness! And the heart which contemplates those regions, grows heavenly as they are heavenly.

II.—Paul is an eminent example in his *earnestness*. He felt that the work to which he was called was a great work—that it was one which engaged the mind of God—one which had for the earnest of its accomplishment, the death and sufferings of God's Son—one in carrying out the purposes of which angels and archangels were ministering spirits, and the Holy Ghost himself the efficacious agent. Well, then, might the Apostle be in earnest, willing to spend, and be spent in such a labor;

well might he be willing to become all things to all men, that he might make known such a glorious theme as the unsearchable riches of Christ. Self-ease might oft entice him to swerve aside—worldly policy might call upon him to forbear—a regard to his own safety might tamper with him and urge him to be less laborious, less hazardous, less zealous; but his answer was like that of Nehemiah, when enticed to leave the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem and hold parley:—"I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down, why should the work cease whilst I leave it." Paul felt the *greatness* of his work—he felt it was one which could not stand still. He felt it was *the* work which Christ came to do. He knew it had engaged God's thoughts from eternity to eternity! He saw all things, from and before the foundation of the world, working to this one centre. He saw all the partial revelations, and types, and shadows of the Old Testament dispensation verging to, and gaining their completion in this. This centre was the Cross of Christ; and the Victim, bleeding there, reconciling the world unto God, and gathering together unto himself the redeemed out of every people, tongue, and nation. Oh, how noble a work for the energies of man's soul, how worthy to become the impulse of his every thought and

action—to *unfold the love of God!* To carry the light to those that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide their feet into the way of peace! To be ambassadors for Christ, bearing the “message of reconciliation, to wit that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them!” Who would not be in earnest on such an embassy! Who with such an object, and such a Master, and such a mission, *can* do the work of the Lord deceitfully!

III.—Paul is an example in his perfect trust. He never knew fear. He wore a coat of mail invulnerable; a shield able to turn aside every fiery dart—it was the shield of faith. Paul is in the midst of insurrection, but he never quails. He fights with beasts at Ephesus, but they have no mastery of him. He is in the dungeon’s stony heart, with his wounds sore and undrest, but he sings praises there. He is in the tempest, but above the creaking of the cordage, and the whistling of the wind, and the wild tumult of the waves, and the angry peal of the thunder, and the dread *melée* of the embattled elements, he could hear the still small voice of God—“Fear not, be of good cheer, Paul!” He stands alone in Nero’s palace, and expresses his unfriended loneliness—“At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men

forsook me." Yet, is he alone? is no unseen hand over him? no strengthening arm beneath him? no comforting presence beside him? Hear his own words—"Nevertheless the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me." Oh! his trust never forsook him, it never even faltered, it seems to grow more powerful in every exigence, it is sometimes heightened to the most perfect persuasion and full assurance of Christ's unfailing stability, and at other times it breaks forth in the strain of triumphant exultation—"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Such was Paul in his character, such in his preaching, such in his faith. "May God grant unto his Church to love that word that he believed, and both to preach and receive the same through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."¹

¹ Collect for St. Bartholomew the Apostle.



ILLUSTRATION I.

THE LISTENING HEART, THE OPENED HEART.

"AND A CERTAIN WOMAN NAMED LYDIA, A SELLER OF PURPLE, OF THE CITY OF THYATIRA, WHICH WORSHIPPED GOD, HEARD US: WHOSE HEART THE LORD OPENED, THAT SHE ATTENDED UNTO THE THINGS WHICH WERE SPOKEN OF PAUL."—Acts xvi. 14.

It was fabled of old, that when the Thracian harper struck the sweet, yet wild music from his strings, rivers staid their course, trees came down from the mountain-top, rocks moved at his melody, and the forest tenants, tamed by the magic of his sounds, lay listening at his feet. What was only fabled of the Orphean lyre, is true of the sounds which echo from the harp of heaven—the Revelation of God. Divine Inspiration brought down the harp which hung behind the throne of God. The prophet-minstrels first swept their fingers across it; mysterious notes of mercy and of menace floated around; but the utterings of their prophecy were but darkly understood. There was silence for four centuries! The Angel of the Gospel then struck the harp of heaven, and the notes which

rung from it were "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace!" and as the symphony of reconciliation swelled along, the stream of custom and the current of absurd belief were staid—groves of idolatry were shaken and uprooted—stony hearts, fractured by contrition, were moved and melted into tears—and many a cruel nature, softened into kindly affection and brotherly love, became "peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated."

That such are the mighty effects produced by "that gospel which is the power of God unto salvation," the varied characters I shall bring before you, will, I trust, abundantly show. What is recorded of them has been written for our example and encouragement. They were persons of like passions with ourselves; open to the same besetments of sin and temptation; having the same world to encounter; but they were "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." Let us trace from God's word how the hand of the Lord led them; with the hope that we may find the same promises and encouragement "a light unto our feet, and a lantern unto our paths!" And to this end we will—1st, consider the Gospel in its *general effects*; and—2nd, in its *domestic and private influence*.

Lydia, the Thyatiran purple-seller ! Every shred and vestige of her merchandize is lost. Time has tarnished, and decay has rent to tatters her costly wares of scarlet and divers colors. But her name remains ! Her example is renowned ! And as we contemplate her gazing with earnest countenance upon the Apostle, we learn *that the listening heart is the opened heart.*

St. Paul and his fellow-disciples had passed by Mysia, and went down to Troas. There a vision appeared to Paul—a Macedonian imploring him to go over and help them. Assuredly gathering from this, that the Lord had called them to preach the gospel there, they hastened to Philippi, the chief city of that region of Macedon. And on the Sabbath-day they “went out of the city by the river side, where prayer was wont to be made.” Some little sacred oratory—some still, secluded spot, where many a burdened heart had aspired to God. Some peaceful sanctuary by the river’s brink, where the noisy world never entered ; where the very solitude seemed to whisper to the spirit, *God is here !* To this spot the Apostle’s feet were turned—some hearts, seeking after God, whom as yet in grace and truth they had not found, led him thither ; thither where they were wont to seek him ; thither where they were wont,

though perchance in ignorance, to breathe to Him the prayer.

Lydia was among that little band. Lydia too, as we may safely judge, was amongst those who oft resorted thither; for it is written of her she *worshipped God*. Her own city was afar off; probably long left behind; but this, perchance, was not the *only* country on which her exiled heart oft pondered. Beyond all thoughts of fatherland—she may have been looking for a better, a brighter home. Her traffic was with the rich and noble; she may have had large possessions, and all on earth that her soul desired. But she longed for something more! What she longed for may have been unknown even to herself. But we may deem that there were inward seekings and inward desires—that her heart was not at rest—that it yearned for a full peace it had not found—and that when she resorted to the hushed chapel by the water's side—it was to search for that peace, and to search for it by worshipping God. Oh how holy is the soul's retirement! how blissful are those earth-withdrawn moments—when the world and time and sense are alike forgotten, and we are entranced in communion with God.

But it is the Sabbath day. And though Philippi is all astir with customary life—though her mer-

chantmen are on her mart, and her traffickers at their trade—there are a few hearts there which know the Sabbath! And these are they who are listening to the Apostle. They are devout women who resorted thither. How deeply, and as if *necessarily*, is Religion a part of woman's existence! The temper of her spirit seems more in accordance with its softer, its purer influences. Man's engrossed mind a thousand thoughts and cares sweep over, each and all serving to deface the recollection of his God—but woman's heart is essentially devout, the very affiance of her nature expresses itself in piety to heaven; and you must root out her being's love before you can wholly alienate her mind from that dependance upon heaven, which is her strength; and that trust in Him unseen, which is her exaltedness.

We may judge what was the Apostle's theme, Christ the wisdom of God, and the power of God. Doubtless, here as elsewhere he preached unto them Jesus and the Resurrection. A name and a doctrine perhaps till then unheard by those listeners. How that name affected the others we know not; but upon Lydia it fell with power. *The Lord opened her heart.* And every other care was hushed there, and every other desire was still. In her inmost being she heard, and with listening

spirit she attended to the things which were spoken. No mere words could have such power over her ; no bare outpourings of speech, however eloquent, could fix her thus with entranced gaze, and close-held breath, and heart and soul and spirit on the utmost stretch of anxiety. They were not *words* she heard but *truths*. There were thoughts within her mind, which, like one benighted in some uncertain forest-gloom, had called and called, but as yet had heard no echoing voice. But *now* she hears one. In her imperfect worship of God she may have faintly heard from Him, "seek ye my face," and her heart's desire may have made answer, "thy face, Lord, will I seek ;" yet she could not with "open face behold the glory of God." But as she now listens, the veil is drawn away from her heart, the uncertainty passes from her eyes ; that little sanctuary to her is all illumined with glory ; it becomes for the time an unearthly Peniel, in faith she sees God *face to face* there. The finger of the there-present Lord has unsealed her ear and unlocked her heart, and she drinks in now those tidings for which her soul had so long been hearkening. The hope now set before her, clear and full of glory, was that which, dim and undefined, she had long felt hovering around her ; the something which

she wanted but could not find—the something without which she could not be at peace!

Pause we for a moment. Let us look back! How much of life has past with us! When we aforetime fondly dreamed of life, and dealt with it as a dream, what promises did it make! what phantom happiness did it evoke before us! The dream perhaps is broken, and we look round as when one awaketh. The mist of the vision is past; the gaudy and confused kaleidoscopic colors have shifted with life's turnings, and we see things as they are. The world in its cold realities hems us around. We have attained life's true philosophy—to look at things as they are; we see them as they are, we know them as they are; and as they are we deal with them. It was a very questionable and loop-holed satisfaction they afforded us, when they were invested with all their visionary and tinsel glitter, but now, now they are dark and disappoint us. And it is well. It needed so to be. We were to learn that this is not our rest—experience has taught us, we cannot find it here. Having realities around us with which we have to cope, we have learnt that we want realities within us—real dependance and real religion, and true piety and tried trust, and that experienced faith which is the victory that overcometh the world. These may

be the requisites we have long been and are still seeking, but have not found: undefined they may have been hovering about us: Christ Jesus may have been heard of by the hearing of the ear, but more than this we need before we can be at peace—"Christ *in* us the hope of glory."

Return we to that holy spot by the rippling waters. Lydia not only hearkens, but she *attends* to the things spoken by Paul. Her mind is rivetted to them; her attention is all awakened; her heart was not only opened to receive them, but like treasure-truths it shut them in, and kept them, and guarded them. She heard strange things that day. The sound of them did not cease with the speaker's words; their echo lingered still, and in her holy musings she seemed to hear the name of Jesus. As she returned back to Philippi's walls she desired to hear afresh of Jesus, and when she reached her home, she constrained the men of God to enter too, that she might hear more of those truths which fell upon her eager thirsting soul, like rain upon the desert's breast. And what is the end of her hearing? She and her household are baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

This is no fancied picture. It is no mere imaginative coloring. It is more or less the experience of every heart which has been opened to hear. The

same name may have been preached to it full oft—the same words may have been spoken to it aforetime—but they have fallen softly and coldly on it, like the feathered snow which the whistling blast drifts onward as fastly as it falls. The same name is again preached; the same words again spoken; and, like the penetrating vernal rain, they have sunk deep, and made to burst forth all the beauty and energy of a new life. That heart now receives “the engrafted word;” it becomes the depository of that “incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever.” Its interest is awakened. Its spiritual faculties are all on the intensest exercise. It pulses now, not only to the momentary vibrations of time, but echoes to the solemn stroke of eternity.

I have known more than one who has listened to the same preacher for years, and who has been at one time, perhaps, a little moved, and at another somewhat warmed to fitful charity and well-doing; but to the root of whose heart, for all those years, the axe has never struck. These have long listened; and the preacher’s words, fervent and faithful, have only been unto them “as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument.” And I have known subsequently, that to these very persons,

at a season best known to God, the word preached has been with power. Like a two-edged sword, it has laid open and made bare all the thoughts and intents of their hearts. They have felt themselves in the hands of the living God. They have felt his presence so powerfully upon them that they could not escape it. They have gone from the house of God, but that presence has followed them. They have withdrawn in solitude to their chambers—but it was there. To the close-curtained couch of sleep—but it was there. To the busy scenes of the week-day world—but it was there. Like the barbed arrow in the stricken hart, that cutting word and that dread presence have followed them, till over-awed with fear and humbled with conviction, they have fallen penitently on their knees before God, exclaiming—“What wilt thou have me to do.” The truth is, their hearts which were long sealed, the Lord has at length opened. They are in earnest now. They have known Christ’s gospel to be to them *the power of God unto salvation*. That name, which is above every name, lingers on their remembrance. Henceforward they see life’s ordinary matters in a new light—all subordinate to higher and holier things; and one thing above all they desire:—“that they may apprehend that for which also they are apprehended of Christ Jesus.”

How important is it to test our own hearts and minds in this matter. *We may test them:—I. As to whether they are in the way of HEARING truth.* Some of us live on and on, and wonder that we grow no better. We get older in years, but not wiser in that “wisdom which cometh from above.” Nearer to Eternity, but not more meet for it. We trace no material change in ourselves; no growth in godliness; no greater degree of weanedness from the world; no advancing to a fuller stature of Christian excellence; and perhaps we are surprised at this, and inwardly murmur at it! But, come, and let us reason together; let us bring our hearts to the test! *How diligent have we been in the way of hearing?* Of the two-and-fifty Sabbaths of each passing year, how many have we given to the full and determined seeking after what “pertains to life and godliness?” Of the one hundred and four sermons which have been preached throughout those two-and-fifty Sabbaths, how many have we heard, how many have we attended to, how many have we followed? Or—and perhaps in this view our hearts will more condemn us—how many have we not heard? How many have we so little attended to that we have not carried them beyond the Church? How many have we gone directly counter to, leaving them to give witness against

us, that we have been *hearers* but not *doers* of the Word?

And if we are unfrequent hearers, or fitful hearers, or prejudiced hearers, or faithless hearers, shall we wonder that the Word preached does not profit us? If we keep from the way of grace and the means of grace, can we be surprised that we do not grow in grace? If we give but two scant hours to God of the four and twenty which he has commanded to be kept holy to Him, shall we marvel that we know so little of the mysteries, and feel so little of the influence of that Gospel, which when *diligently* heard is the power of God unto salvation? The past Sabbaths are now mingled with the *past* eternity. The sermons which have been preached, whether in our hearing or out of our hearing, have ceased to sound. The last echo of them which lingered vibrating for a little period in our remembrance, may be, is hushed. But those Sabbaths are to be called up again; the account of the Gospel, which has been preached within our opportunity of hearing it, has to be given in; and the eternity *to come*—with its bliss on the one hand, or its despair unutterable on the other, very mainly hinges upon how, and how punctually and steadfastly, we are receiving, and are influenced by, that message of reconciliation—

that "word of God which liveth and abideth for ever."

II. We may *test our hearts as to whether we are in the way of ATTENDING to the Truth*. How solemn is the house of God! How holy is the place! Divest it of the external circumstances of the scene—behold it as God beholds it—and how *holy* is the place! It is the halting-place in life's pilgrimage. The resting time after each six days' wearying stage. The space of amnesty from toil and labour. The high ground—the Tabor summit where we see the Son of God transfigured, and surrounded with the emanations of his glory. A turning point in life's toilsome road, whence we may catch through some far-off glimpse, "the rest which remains," "the continuing city," "the house not made with hands," which are prepared for us at the journey's close. Behold it as God beholds it, and how *awful* is the place! The spirit of God moves there. The Saviour's presence, though unseen, hovering like the mysterious SHECHINAH, waits there. Angels, as messengers of mercy, or as recorders against those who are dissemblers with God—throng the scene. Life and death are at stake. Sins are forgiven or confirmed. The heart is moved and softened; or else grows more insensate in its indifference. Eternal life with all its

weight of glory is in the balance. The blood of the Son of God whereby we are sanctified, is by our neglect and unbelief trodden under foot; or by our faith and petitioning, we draw near to it as to "a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness." A warning voice, though by the multitude unheard, rings around us there:—"To-day if ye will hear God's voice, harden not your hearts." The visitation-time, within which some careless sinner may yet learn the things which belong to his everlasting peace, may be just lingering to its close. To some the message of reconciliation may be sounded for the last time. To some the irrevocable doom may be about to be sealed for ever. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still." How fraught then with all that is momentous and solemn is the house of God!

Now with reference to this scene of solemnity and the stupendous issues which are at work there, let the heart be tested; and let us receive evidence, if, like Lydia, we have *attended* to the things spoken there.

Recall we the Sabbaths of the year past. They come! They troop across remembrance! Memory is burdened with them! Each Sabbath was a faithful monitor, each brought a message from God to us. They come! but to how many do they wear a gloom

of sadness? To how many a heart do they appear like spirits which cannot rest, stealing in upon us, *looking*—if not *uttering* reproof. Those Sabbaths which are passed—how holy were they, when, at the early dawn of the first day of the week, they came forth from God, breathing of heaven and of peace! But how changed and disfigured were they, what a burden of condemnation did they carry up to God again, at the four-and-twenty hours' close. Their peaceful appearance ruffled—their sacred rites neglected—their saint-white garments of holiness sullied—their hours so precious and so irrevocable, disjointed from their fitness to prepare us for our God, by folly and indolence, and lying piece-meal around, giving sad testimony of Sabbaths lost, and Sabbaths broken, and Sabbaths crying out against us in the ears of God. Those Sabbaths have gone, but their warnings linger still! How many have we heeded? In turn, all the great truths of the Gospel have been laid before us. God's love—the Saviour's incarnation—his life of suffering—the loveliness of His example—the purity of his doctrine—his agony and bloody sweat—his unutterable and soul-crushing anguish—as racked and strained—mocked and crowned—bleeding and fainting—he paid down his life, drop by drop, a ransom for our sins. These

are the contemplations which have engaged us ; and the glory of his exaltation ; and his appearing in the presence of God for us ! From Him through his ambassadors, you have heard God's controversy with his people. "We have prayed you in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God." "We have reprov'd, rebuked, exhorted with all long-suffering and doctrine." Have the things spoken profited you ? Have they been heeded as God's message, though they were by man's words ? Has your attention dwelt upon them ? Have you felt that they concerned you, that they were connected with your peace ? That without the belief of some, and the practice of others of them, your heart could not know peace ? If so, "give the more earnest heed to the things which you have heard, lest at any time you let them slip." And if not, pause now, with just fear :—"lest a promise be left to you," by inattention or unbelief, or a hardened heart, "you should seem to come short of it." Pause now, duly weighing in your hearts the declaration—"Whoso despiseth the Word shall be destroyed."

"The *Gospel* of Christ is the power of God unto salvation." Not the Gospel lying unopened in our homes. Not the Gospel listened to by others, whilst we forsake the assembling of ourselves

together. But the Gospel preached to us; the Gospel attended to; the Gospel studied in our retirement, when we are alone in our chambers and are still; the Gospel heeded as God's plan and condition of our salvation; the Gospel practised in our lives—exemplified in our characters—exhibited in our homes—regulating our dealings—carrying us beyond our light afflictions which are but for a moment, to look for those things which to the natural eye are not seen; the eternal and exceeding weight of glory reserved for those who through “faith and patience inherit the promises.”

“The Gospel of Christ is the *power* of God unto salvation.” But as such we must acknowledge its power—be influenced by its power. Its power is to deliver from sin, and so to save. Its power is to awaken to holiness, and so to save. Its power is to purge the conscience from dead works, and so to save. Its power is to renew God's marred and lost image within us, and so to save. But if its power does not deliver—and not sanctify—and not cleanse—and not renew, it will not save. Its sounds may even echo around us, we may be externally conversant with all its promises and demands, it may give us light enough to know what we are to do to be saved, and we may be far from salvation still. The *heart* may never have

been opened to receive its sounds. We may have the form of knowledge and yet deny the power of it. And having light enough to lead to heaven, we may, with that very light in our hands, be walking in that broad and easy way whose "paths decline to death."

"The Gospel of Christ is the power of *God* unto salvation." The power is of Him. The listening ear, and the opened heart are from Him. "Of his own will begat he us with the Word of Truth," writes the Apostle. Of ourselves we cannot receive the Gospel in its quickening and sanctifying influences. By nature there is such darkness and deadness, and insensateness hanging upon, and frozen about our hearts, that every inlet by which light and warmth could enter is anticipated and closed. The truth may be told—the alarm may be sounded—the embassy of peace may be declared to us, but of ourselves we cannot effectually apprehend them:—"the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." But this is no discouragement. "They shall know who follow on to know." He who asketh receiveth. Pray to God to prepare your heart, and open your heart. Seek *sincerely* to enter into the house of God. Draw near there,

not as a cold duty, but desiring to meet God there. Enter there with humility—with an anxious world-foregoing heart; listen to what you hear, not curiously and captiously, but as *heeding* the things which are spoken. Pray for help to *do* and *practise* what you hear. Examine yourselves often on how the word preached profits you; and if it profit you little, seek to learn the cause; whether the fault is not in yourself?—whether there has not been something distracting and prejudicing you • which would not let you *attend* to the truths which you might have heard, and which would have been, through God, to your furtherance in knowledge and godliness? Give a part of the Sabbath morning to preparation at home. Seek the Lord *privately* before you seek him *publicly*—and then you will not only find God's presence when you enter his Temple, but you will find his presence going up with you. You may not feel that ardour—that zest for God's sanctuary which the Psalmist had:—“One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and enquire in his Temple.” But perchance *now* you have a stronger desire than *heretofore*. Yet the very faintest desire is of God; if we have the feeblest inclination to listen so as to

learn, that inclination is from Him. He gives first the *will* to *hear*, and then the *ability* to *do*. The grace he imparts to us may at first seem in small measure, but he giveth more grace. "They who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." The light which is dim at first, "opens more and more unto the perfect day." And if we would experience more of the hearing ear, and understanding, opened heart, we must wait upon the Lord. And though, like the prophet, we may send six successive times to catch the tidings of the rain of God's blessing, and seem to send in vain, and wait in vain, yet we must not despair. The cloud will rise at length—it may be scarce discernible—and no bigger than a man's hand—but it is a harbinger of greater things, it is the forerunner of the "sound of abundance of rain." May God vouchsafe to us the dew of his blessing, and grant that on our hearts opened to receive it, "his doctrine may drop as the rain—as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass."

ILLUSTRATION II.

THE BRAND PLUCKED FROM THE BURNING.

"THEN HE CALLED FOR A LIGHT, AND SPRANG IN AND CAME TREMBLING, AND FELL DOWN BEFORE PAUL AND SILAS, AND BROUGHT THEM OUT, AND SAID: SIRS, WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?"—Acts xvi. 29, 30.

"THE wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." How untraceable is the *wind* of heaven! how mysterious is the *Spirit* of heaven! In its operations how different is the former; we witness it, at one time, a mighty and irresistible power, rending the mountains, and breaking the rocks in pieces—snapping, with unseen but giant hand, the cedars of Libanus—speaking, as if with God's voice, so terribly, that the wilderness of Cades trembles, and the uneasy ocean awakes and lifts up its head, and asks in the deep, solemn murmur of its waves, what is His will, "Who has measured its waters in the hollow of his hand!" At another time the same breath is

around us, but so bland, so gentle, that the leaf which rustles in the faintest breeze scarce quivers, and the ripple which the most languid zephyr's sigh can move, is undiscerned. In either case it is the same breath of heaven—but how different in its effects! how changed in its operations! But not more widely different than the operations of God's Spirit. In one case His agency is irresistible and constraining—pulling down every stronghold and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God—spreading round it solemn terror, and most religious awe; and, at another, whispering and speaking silently to the soul with “still small voice,” not enthralling it with dread, but drawing it with love. At one time terrifying the heart, as with the jailer at Philippi, and at another opening and preparing it, that like Lydia's it may listen, and learn that “peace of God which passeth understanding.” In the former case, plucking a brand from the burning; in the latter, pouring upon a thirsting spirit the dew of his blessing.

Let our present consideration be, the Gospel of Christ the power of God unto salvation, in *plucking a brand from the burning!*

Paul being at Philippi, in Macedonia—a damsel, possessed with a spirit of divination, followed him

and his fellow-disciple as they went to prayer. The poor Pythoness, another spirit being given to her, miraculously felt that she was turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Beforetime a *lying* spirit spoke within her, now the spirit of *truth* spoke, and she cried out:—"These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." "And this she did many days. But Paul being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." Her masters finding that the hope of her gains was gone—seize Paul and Silas—stir up the multitudes against them, and induce the magistrates to beat them. "And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely: who having received such a charge thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks."

Picture to your imaginations this Philippian jailer. A grim, inexorable man—with a cheek perchance whose deep lines of harshness, feeling never stirred; with cold hard eye, which pity never moistened with a tear; and with heart of such stern stuff, that its adamant encasing could take no dint from mercy or compassion. Cruel he may have

been by nature, but he had grown absolutely ruthless by the customary sight of torture and of scourging. We may well suppose that the bleeding backs and trickling wounds of these innocent men would not move him; he had no thought of their dark dungeon gloom, or their gored limbs fast in the stocks. He slept as soundly and as carelessly as at other times. His slumbers, it may be, were not disturbed with any "compunctious visitings" of relentment which would not let him rest. His dreams, perhaps, were unscared with any vision of inhumanity recoiling on his own head. He slept!

Not so his prisoners! Their dungeon was dismal and dreary, but there was an unwonted light there. They were in the inner prison, but their Lord was with them. Their feet were fast in the stocks, but their spirits were not bound. Their livid seams and undrest wounds were gory with the blunt gashes of the thong—but there was no aching, no smart, no bitterness within. The sleeping guards, beyond their bolted door, may have droned out their dull monotonous sounds—but *within* those doors there were notes to which attendant angels listened, as at the lonely midnight hour Paul and Silas sang praises unto God! Oh! the blessedness of carrying God with us in our

hearts—and feeling that where we are, *He* is! Oh! the unspeakable comfort and greatness of that faith, which animates the servants of the Lord—whether in the fiery furnace, as Shadrach and his fellows; or in the den of lions, as Daniel; or in the desert Isle of Patmos, as the beloved Disciple; or in the prison's stony heart, as Paul and Silas; and causes them to realize the fulness of the promise:—"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee"—"Lo! I am with you always!"

'Tis midnight! The dungeon wards are still. The silent moon is in heaven—and the stars look brightly down—but their light pierces not that inner prison. Yet the unsleeping eye of God keeps vigil there! Heavy, drowsy slumber weighs upon the turnkeys; they have forgotten their charge; but the Lord, who watches o'er his people, is not unmindful of them. How still, how solemn still, is all the scene! Is it God's presence there which spreads such breathless calm? The pulse of life seems stopped! And now that prison-hymn is silent; there is a hush, which in its very stillness is appalling! One could deem that the Angel of Death had passed and made its mimic image, Sleep, so deep and overwhelming, that it should wake no more! But hark! Every dungeon echoes with alarm! The long

avenues carry on the hollow, crashing noise! The prison to its foundation rocks! Every barred door bounds from its hinge, and from its fastening! And yet there is no light—no trampling of hurried feet—no din of voices, as if the prison's iron walls were broken open by some host! All is darkness! No form is seen—no step is heard—no hand is felt—and yet the chains of the prisoners, snapt as withes, fall off. The earthquake, which is God's minister, is there—and rumbling thunderings, which do his pleasure.

Methinks I behold the scene! Methinks I catch the panic and alarm! Methinks I see the jailer scared from his slumber, with drawn sword, and staggering light, springing in, trembling! Methinks I hear his terror-uttered words:—"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

I have endeavoured to picture to you the scene, that it may dwell on your remembrance! Let it not depart! It closely concerns many of you. Oh! I fear there are those who need some such alarm! Those who need to be aroused from as careless a sleep! Those who need to call for a light, and spring in, trembling, at the *felt* presence of God. Those who have need to utter the cry of awakened terror:—"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

But we have now advanced to a position in the

case before us, where we begin to trace the power of the Gospel of Christ. It was no power of the Gospel which awoke the jailer, or that kept him from falling on his own sword ; or that goaded him to rush in trembling ; or that forced the words from him "what must I do to be saved." All this was alarm, rather than sober anxiety ; consternation not conviction ; a fleeing from wrath, rather than a flying to Christ. But, when Paul answered his enquiry—when the Apostle instructed him—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house"—when he spake unto him the word of the Lord, and that rough heart was moved, and that savage nature was wrought upon, and that cruel spirit became merciful, and the jailer, forgetting the earthquake and the wide-set prison doors, began to love those who spake to him of Jesus, and took them that same hour of the night, and washed their stripes ; then we see the love of Christ at work ; then we see the power of that Gospel which makes those who heartily embrace it *new creatures* in Christ Jesus. It was no longer alarm ; alarm led him to grasp his sword and to flee to the inner prison, to see if the mysterious captives were at large. Alarm held him when he saw them calm and unmoved, and heard them counsel him "to do himself no harm ;" but

feelings he had never known before—an impulse over which he had no control—a sudden warmth which melted him to gentleness—these strange influences—strong and instantaneous—were the effects of that wonder-working Gospel before which, *figuratively*, “every valley is exalted, and every mountain and hill made low; and the crooked made straight, and the rough places plain.”

Now no change can be imagined more marvellous than that a stern, pitiless jailer, should intently listen to lips which proclaimed mercy. We are lost in astonishment when we image to ourselves a scared and horror-haunted tool of cruelty tamed from his ferocity; and, as if his life hung upon a word, thirsting for every sound which fell from the Apostle’s tongue. Truly the Word of God is quick and powerful, it is a lightning-shaft which cannot be withstood, but which fuses and rives even the hardest rock on which it strikes. When it is carried home to the heart by God, it bears conviction with it; issuing forth from Him, it returns not to him void, but accomplishes the work whereto he sends it. Lightning-like, it not only rushes with power, but it bears with it a flash vivid and penetrating; it lets into the soul’s dark places a marvellous light; it reveals, by its sudden gleam, how dreadful is the darkness through which

it breaks. It startles, it over-awes; and between the solemn pauses of its thundering, there is a close-held breath of stillness which tells the listening dread within! Not the lying delusion round the spirit of Ananias; not the infuriate bigotry of Paul when a persecutor; not the jugglery of Elymas the sorcerer; not the avaricious and lustful passions which deadened the heart of Felix, could withstand it. It is not only quick and powerful, but is sharper than any two-edged sword, *piercing* even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Nor is the Philippian jailer's case by any means an unusual one. Christ's great work in the *conversion of souls* is constantly thus carried out. There may be differences in *individual* circumstances, but the *general* operations are the same. How many a heart is a stranger to every influence of the Gospel! In certain cases dead in trespasses and sins; in others, Samson-like, held in dalliance by some soft, betraying, Delilah passion; in others, so completely mammonized, that the deceitfulness of riches causes it to make gold its hope, and fine gold its confidence; in others, like another Judas, betraying its Lord for paltry silver pieces; in others, like Ahab's or Haman's, inflamed

into a very hell, by vexation or secret hate ; or, in others, like Martha's, so troubled with many things, that it cannot hear the Saviour's words. In each, or any of these cases, to human sight, the heart may not be so desperate as that of the jailer ; but in the sight of Him who "searcheth hearts," it is loathsome, hideous, and with the wrath of God abiding on it. The *world* may think it needs no renewing ; but does the world know all that thinks, and acts, and prompts, and rules within us ? Our *own easy natures* may flatter us that there is nothing very appalling in our case ; that we are very decent, and passable Christians, as the world goes ; and that though we might be *somewhat* better, all is pretty safe with us, we shall get to heaven *somehow*, all will be well at last. And our *prejudices* which, *though perhaps unconsciously*, we have taught to supersede the commands of God, may even put us in the position of the Galileans of old :—"Christ can do no mighty work upon us, because of our unbelief." I take not an unfair standard-specimen of the multitudes who call themselves Christians. I do not overdraw the picture—nor do I set down aught in malice.

And for years, it may be, they who have such hearts within their breasts, *seem* to hear God's

word, though their very continuance in that which is contrary to God's Spirit, argues that they deny the power of it. But, at length, the might of the Lord strives with them. It may be, some sermon has aroused them—it may be they have been snatched from imminent peril—it may be that on a sick-bed, alone with God and God's undying witness—conscience—they have felt it was a "fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." It may be that into their God-forgetting and God-despising households death has passed, and gathered into his cold, dark arms one and another; and borne them suddenly to his gloomy charnel-house; and the knell has found an echo in the surviving heart! And from some of these causes the soul feels a shudder thrill across it. It looks within, and all is gloomy and desolate! It looks behind, and all is weariness and self-condemning! It looks around, and all is darkness and perplexity! It looks onward, and the judgment is there—and the piercing eye of one who cannot look upon iniquity; and an anticipated sentence, whose dread reverberation shall roll around the Judge's throne:—"Depart, ye cursed!" And that soul, filled with amazement, cannot rest! It is fraught with intensest anxiety to flee from the wrath to come!

Now all this is not the power of the Gospel—it

is the terror of conscience—the condemnation of the Law—the heavy-pressing realization that God is a “consuming fire.” These may urge it on, and give it no rest—may make it flee as from the avenger, and take hold of the horns of the altar—may cause it to lift the heart-wrung cry “What must I do to be saved?”—may so humble it, and so awaken it, that it is just fitted to grasp at the offers of the Gospel, and cast a believing eye on that bleeding Saviour, who was made “sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him!” And here the power of the Gospel begins; it leads on that self-condemned heart to Jesus; it points to Him as to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness; it breathes that to those that are in Him “there is no condemnation;” it tells of a blood-bought pardon—of proffered peace—of free justification—of implanted holiness—of faith’s victory—of the hope of glory—of an inheritance incorruptible—till the soul, overpowered by divine love, and transformed from its previous besetting sinfulness, to conformity with Christ, is led on from strength to strength, and “adds to its faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness.”

I know it is thought by some that there is no

need of conversion *now*. That Jews and idolaters needed to be converted, but that to nominal and baptized Christians the term is inappropriate. But be it remembered—that as *he* “was not a Jew who was one outwardly,” so neither is he a Christian who is only one outwardly. Many will say at the last day, “Lord we were called by thy name,” to whom there will not only be the reply “*I never knew you ;*” but on whose souls the seal of Christ’s name will cleave as an eternal curse. What! has our holy Faith become so changed—so compromising a thing, that it requires *now* a different standard of holiness and separateness from the world than it did in the time of the Apostles and first Christians? Oh! Sirs, when I consider what passes for Christianity among us, and what Christianity was when it was preached and practised by its first teachers; when the truth of the matter fixes itself upon me, and says look upon *this* picture and upon *that*, I acknowledge I can scarce trace one feature of resemblance. But have the Gospel requirements been retrenched? Has God’s word temporised that it may fall in with the easy and vacillating notions of each capricious age? Is there anything which countenances the false delusion, that God’s truth *can* change, because man will not receive it; or, that God’s demands

will be lessened, because man thinks them too rigorous and severe? And if not, then do not try to convince yourselves that a man may be a stranger to a change of heart; full of worldliness; with no love of God, and no peace of God ruling within; insensible to repentance and contrition; void of that *faith* without which no man can *please*, and of that *holiness* without which no man can *see* the Lord; who has never taken up the cross; never forgot the things which are behind, that he might reach to those that are before; who never watches and seldom prays; who does not resist, but yields to temptation; who takes no heed lest he fall; who girds not himself in the Christian armour; exercises not himself unto godliness; is not diligent "to make his calling and election sure;" who knows not that the state to which he is called is one of righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; in fine, who has no influencing sense of a renewed heart within him, and no hope of glory set before him. I say, do not try to convince yourselves, unless you can blot out the whole light of Gospel truth, or prove that it means the very opposite of what it speaks, that such an one needs not to be *converted*. He needs a change not only in his thoughts and practices, but to the very root of his being; there is nothing in him which

can identify him as being a *branch* of the *living vine*; nothing which proves that he is "created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

And if a *real conversion* of heart is so necessary, so is also a great and noticeable *change of conduct*, differing in *degree* according to the difference in our ordinary lives and conversations, but in *some degree* essentially necessary in all, who are only *beginning* to know godliness in the active operations and the power of it. There is no mistaking in the world the man who really is in earnest, and the man who is not; and when the dissolute man, or the indolent man, or the intemperate man, gives up his follies or his indifference, there is no mistaking the change. And shall we think that reformation of life can be discerned, and that reformation of the heart cannot? Will the man who is alive to his present interests prove it in his diligence, and the man who is alive to his eternal interests not prove it in *his*? Will he who practices in any human art become skilled and experienced, and will he who exercises himself unto godliness be so poor a proficient that he will not be able to discern and to manifest that he is fulfilling the work which is given him to do? Was Zacchæus changed when Christ visited not his *home* merely but his *heart*? "Behold Lord

the half of my goods I give to the poor!" Was the poor woman, that was a sinner, changed when forgetting her gaudy and empty ornaments she wept upon her Saviour's feet, and wiped them with the napkin of her hair? Was Paul changed when he declared—"But what things were gain to me those I counted loss for Christ?" When the fountain is bitter, every drop which wells up from it will be bitter. When the heart is unclean, every act, as well as every feeling of that heart will be unclean. But if the fountain be purified, the change will be traced in its sweet waters; and if the heart, which is the seat of Christ's power, and "out of which are the issues of life," be made the residence of holiness, the thoughts which spring from it, and the actions to which it gives impulse, will be holy. The soul dead in trespasses and sins, because it is ignorant of all *change*, will assert and maintain that no *change* is necessary; but the truth of Christ by which we are to measure and compare ourselves, speaks in no indistinct and undefined terms when it asserts—"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."

And how will this change most show itself? In this! that the man, upon whom it has passed, will make this his great seeking and enquiry, "*What*

must I do to be saved?" We shall not hear this question from the thoughtless and deriding—we shall not hear it from the world-seeking and the self-seeking—we shall not hear it from the self-approving, and the Pharisee—we shall not hear it from the almost-persuaded; and the procrastinator, who dallies with the present, and talks of a more convenient season; but, from him who is in earnest—from the heart which the terrors of God have made afraid—from the conscience-smitten and the sin-laden—from the prodigal just coming to himself—from the soul, soon to pass into eternity—from the long-blinded, whose eyes are opened, and who reads now, as in letters of fire, a truth as startling as that upon the Chaldean's palace wall:—"It is appointed unto men once to die—but after this the judgment!" From these, and such as these, we shall hear not *once*, but *often*—not in *words* only, but by every *anxious expression* of look, and mien, and character, "*What must I do to be saved?*" The heart of the time-server is cumbered with many things; but the soul, which is set upon eternity, has but one great thought—*how eternity in its blessedness shall be secured*. For this every moment of our being is spared to us; for this the Redeemer's work was undertaken, and carried through; for this the cross was endured, and the

shame despised ; for this the Holy Spirit, in His convicting and quickening influences, was vouchsafed ; for this the message of reconciliation was committed to the ambassadors of Christ, and the stewards of the mysteries of God ; and for this—to *secure eternity in its, as yet, incomprehensible blessedness to you*, the “dispensation of the Gospel is committed unto us.”

Do I hear some heart asking this anxious question ? Do I see some eye turned wistfully and enquiringly as the gaze of the serpent-bitten in the wilderness ? Does harrowing stress of conscience strain at, and burn in some heart, too oppressed to give utterance to the words, *What must I do to be saved?*—Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. “Behold, I lay in Zion, a chief corner-stone, elect, precious—and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded.” “By Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses.” “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” Do you ask what must you *do* ? Jesus is the *way*, walk in Him ; Jesus is the *truth*, believe in Him ; Jesus is the *life*, live in Him. Do as the bitten Israelites did. They looked to the lifted serpent, and were healed ; look you to the lifted Saviour, and

be saved. Faith brings us to the Saviour, and faith unites us to the Saviour, and faith keeps us rooted, and grounded, and settled, and established in Him! Remember, faith is the gift of God; seek it from Him. From Him it proceeds, by Him it is kept active, through Him it is the victory that overcomes the world. Practice what increases faith. Faith comes by hearing. Be diligent hearers. Faith is in answer to prayer! Pray without ceasing. Faith is increased by oft looking to the object on which it is placed—"Look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith." Faith is elevated by heavenly contemplations—"look not only on the things which are seen, but on the things which are not seen!" In a word, take Jesus for your hope—heaven for your aim—the Bible for your guide—and prayer for your pilgrim's staff; and faithful is He who has promised:—"He will be found of them who seek Him;" and through Him you shall yet receive "the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

ILLUSTRATION III.

THE SCRIPTURE SEARCHERS.

"THESE WERE MORE NOBLE THAN THOSE IN THESSALONICA, IN THAT THEY RECEIVED THE WORD WITH ALL READINESS OF MIND, AND SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY, WHETHER THOSE THINGS WERE SO."—Acts xvii. 11.

"CANST thou by searching find out God?" was the question of the inspired writer of the Book of Job. "Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" And well he might ask the question, for in Job's time:—"by the name of God Almighty" was God known; "but by his name *Jehovah* was He not known;" as yet He had made but little revelation of His mind—but little revelation of His plans and purposes.

But as ages rolled onwards; as the gradual unfolding of each expanding dispensation brightened more and more, God was revealing himself. By call, by promise, by vision, by inspiration, he caused himself to be known. In his covenant

with Abraham—out of the thunderings, and darkness, and lightning-gleams of Sinai—as he passed before Moses when he was concealed in the clefts of the rocks—and by the mystic utterings of a successive line of prophets—he by little and by little made known his character and his majesty, and the depths of his decrees, till at length “He who had at sundry times and in divers manners spoken unto the fathers by the prophets, spoke in these last days by his Son.” He who was in the beginning with God; he who is coëternal, coëqual, and coëssential with him, “*He* has revealed him.”

And is the question now asked “Canst thou by searching find out God?” Yes, search Him in his revealed word; search him by his promised spirit; search him in the faithfulness of his declarations, and we shall find out God, not merely as the Creator and Preserver, but, as the Mediator and Redeemer, as the Teacher and the Sanctifier; nay, we shall find him concentrating all his glory, and his goodness, and his purpose, in one comprehensive truth:—“*God is love!*”

Now if the Holy Scriptures are what they are announced to be, a revelation of the mind of God; if they contain, as we believe, all things necessary for life and godliness; if in them there is eternal life; if there, as in a glass, we may behold ourselves;

if through them we may share the Evangelist's blessedness, and behold heaven opened, and be permitted to catch, though it be but a bare glimpse of what without them we could never have conceived—what an unappreciable gift has God vouchsafed us. If we *had* no Revelation—if the volume which contains it had not become as familiar as any household form—and if it were announced that “an angel was to fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth,” should we not then say in our hearts, who shall ascend into heaven to learn it, and who shall descend into the deep to find it out? But what saith the Scriptures? “The word is *nigh* thee, even in thy mouth and in thine heart.” Yet how often does it lie a neglected witness—a depth unsearched—a mine unexplored—a message unheeded—a revealment and an announcement to which the eye is shut, and the ear is closed!

Let us contrast with such indifference and neglect of God's Word, the noble readiness and attention of the Bereans, and let us strive to emulate them in that exalted character in which they are presented to us as *the Scripture-Searchers*.

Paul and Silas, going into their Synagogues, spoke to them as ambassadors of Christ. They

spoke to them, as to others, things that were new ; things that were strange. Yet the Bereans did not reject them on this account, nor because what they declared did not exactly coincide with what they *thought* to be God's will. But from the fact that they professed to speak to them of God, and from God, they thought their words worthy of heed ; they felt it necessary to be well convinced if the Lord had further revealed himself, or if he had not. It was no hindrance to them that the name which Paul preached was everywhere spoken against. Truth, at its first appearance, has always been despised and rejected. It was nothing to them that these preachers of new doctrines had just been driven from Thessalonica. Because the Thessalonians would not hear, must they, from mere example, and that a bad one, say *we* will not hear? That is a most slavish custom ; an indolent, unthinking habit, which does not ask, is this or that probable truth, or, is it not ; but which asks—do many people receive this—have any of the rulers believed it? Truth should commend itself to every man's *own* conscience. *Belief* is a very different thing to *assent* ; with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness, not with the *ear* merely ; not by heedlessly receiving or rejecting popular notions, and passing catch-doctrines, and

retailing our prejudices—as if we had thought of these things, weighed them, given earnest heed to them. The *believing* man must be a *thinking* man; one whose mind, as well as whose ears, are open—not to hear only, but to ponder the things heard—and to search the sacred records, if the things purporting to be *truth* are *truth*; and if so, to receive it, though it have but few favourers—and if not, to reject it, though it be bolstered up with all the speciousness of language, and all the sanction of authority, and the loud approval of uncounted voices, which are but the echo of the prevailing and popular opinion. The thinker is the man who is in earnest. He honors God in the very act of seeking out the truth—for *God is truth*—He will yet *know*, for he follows on to *know*.

Now such were the Bereans! They did not reject Paul, because what he said was contrary to what they had heard before, or was beyond what they had known before. Men live to learn, and hear to learn—and so it was with them. They knew that if what he said was *truth*, it would bear scrutiny; if what he said was truth, it was worth enquiry; if what he said was truth, that as such it should be patiently received, and patiently considered; and so, as wise men, they acted; they

received his words with readiness—there was no fore-determined opposition to them—no attempt to silence him by clamour or gainsaying—but an earnest simplicity to know, and a determined resolution to search, if these things were so.

Now we can imagine we see these Scripture-searchers. They were reasonable men. They had already a partial revelation from God, their Scriptures, the Old Testament Scriptures; and now a new revelation claims their regard and their belief. And what was their enquiry—*is it contrary to the Old?* They felt, it may be, God is one—and in Him is no contradiction; if the one revelation is an unfolding, or an amplification, or an addition to the other—the two will agree, they will throw light one on the other, they will witness one to the other. And thus to *test* truth and to follow out truth—they *sought the Scriptures*, and sought them *daily*. And doubtless God's Spirit was with them. And things that were dim before, now shone out in all the light of clearness; and things which were knotty and difficult before, were now unravelled; and things which appeared contradictory before, were now reconciled; and words which gave an uncertain sound before, were now harmonious. They *sought the Scriptures*, and its depths disclosed to them their treasures. *They*

searched the Scriptures, and, like men who had walked benighted before, they saw their path, and found it clearer and clearer, and brighter and brighter, till they knew they were in the right way. *They searched the Scriptures*, and the search repaid them. They were no longer left in doubt, or in a fettered bondage of thought, but the truth made them free ; it opened their understandings, and they were surprised at their former blindness ; it opened their views of divine things, and they were astonished at their former ignorance. The teaching of the Apostles, whose words they had received with readiness, became to them a key to prophecy—an interpreter to its dark sayings, and they found in Jesus Christ, who was preached to them, *Him* to whom all the prophets gave witness. They understood, then, that in Him dwelt, not only all the fulness of the Godhead bodily—but that that Godhead was veiled in the garments of mortality ; that he was the *child to be born*, and yet the *everlasting Father* ; the despised and rejected of men, and yet the “mighty God, the Prince of Peace, of the increase of whose government and peace there was to be no end ;” and the Spirit of God so led them, and so carried this conviction to their hearts, that “many of them believed ; also of honourable women, which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.”

And so it is with every heart which begins to *search the Scriptures*. We go to the search, it may be, with many a prejudice, with much reluctance, with mere confused notions, as to the writings of good and holy men. But the Spirit of God unseals the Book, and the Spirit of God unseals our hearts, and what a marvellous light seems to fill every page! We search now and feel the influence of our searching. It is not mere *reading* but *learning*; we *grow wise*—wise unto salvation! It is not a *mere book* now which is before us, but a Revelation—a very Apocalypse. We contemplate not simply the writings of men, but the mind of God; what he has revealed from himself of himself. Space and time are too narrow to contain our thoughts when we sit down to this great study—the themes of Scripture teaching—for our minds and our conceptions, like the truths we search into, become exalted, enlarged, spiritualized. We go back through a crowd of past ages; we trace through centuries, where human record is forgotten, God's footsteps; and by a gradual development we search out his will, and his way. We look forward to Eternity to come, and as we look at it through the glass, and the light, and the medium of God's Word, the Future's mystic veil disparts, and the things which

to the natural eye are invisible—through the light and the power by which we look at them, one by one, break upon us. It is with us, in truth, as with the astronomic explorer of the heavens; when he looks at them vaguely, he discerns nothing distinctly, nothing in its beautiful harmony, and order, and oneness; but as he gazes closely, and brings the power of optic aid to second his search, star after star breaks upon him—world upon world; and the heavens are no longer a confused mass of uncertain lights—but a wondrous, a perfect system, teeming with beauty, and effulgent with God. And so with the Scripture-searcher; when he looked at the Scriptures carelessly, and occasionally, they were mazy and inexplicable, with a certain amount of light, but dazzling, and at which he could not steadfastly gaze; and he could trace no harmony in them—no oneness—no leading revelation and truth, forming the very web and woof, the very beginning and ending, the very breadth and depth of their shining and wondrous con-texture. But when he begins to search them, when he calls in further aid than reading them, when he seeks light from the Spirit, and aid from the Spirit, and application from the Spirit, and an eye of sincerity from the Spirit—as he searches he finds new truths, like so many bright lights, break-

ing in upon Him ; depths, he had never conjectured, now open out to him ; purposes of God's wisdom, he had never conceived, are now seen plainly ; and throughout the universe of God's Revelation, and the constellations of its truths, he traces one perfect harmony, coöperation, beauty, and love.

But this readiness of the Bereans to search the Scriptures—from whence did it proceed ? From the Gospel of Christ being made to them, the power of God unto salvation. They had long had the Scriptures—were, doubtless, familiar with the summary, at least, of their contents—had, in all probability, revered them, as much as the other Jews—most scrupulously and most superstitiously, though not spiritually. They had been read to them, as to the rest of Israel, in the Synagogue every Sabbath-day. But they did not effectually hear them ; they did not up till this time understand them ; they did not till now search them for a specific purpose. But they heard Paul preach. He testified to them that Jesus whom he proclaimed was their long-told, their long-expected Messiah, the light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. He preached to them that all who believed in Him were “justified from all things from which they

could not be justified by the law of Moses." And this Gospel—this God-message—was of power to them; it sunk into their ears and into their hearts; it awakened enquiring thoughts within them; they wished to know more of it, and to know whether what they heard was the teaching of God, or a cunningly-devised fable. So they brought it to God's standard; they measured it not by their own conceptions, but by the measure and balance of the sanctuary, the light and the record of revealed and eternal truth; and thus they were led into all truth. To the prophecy which was but as a "light shining in a dark place" they gave heed, till the brighter, the fuller manifestation of grace, was made known to them; and till "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness shined in their hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;" and till "with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, they were changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."—2 Cor. iii. 18.

There are four especial reasons why, like the Bereans, we should *search the Scriptures*.

I.—Because in them we have eternal life, and these are they that testify of Christ. But, on this point, I shall not dwell at present, as it will be fully considered in the last discourse of this series.

II.—To see if the things we hear, and profess to believe—as well as the practices in which we live, *are so* as the Lord would have them be. There is the wisdom of the world, and the wisdom which is of God, and these are commonly opposed. The wisdom of the world is foolishness with God; and the wisdom of God is foolishness with the world. But the wisdom by which we are to be made wise unto salvation, is God's wisdom; and to learn this, we are to become as little children, and to receive what God says, and to judge from this what is right, and what is wrong—what is holy, and what is unholy. And, think you that one half of the ordinary opinions, and customary pursuits, and secure satisfaction, and easy indifference of the majority of those who call themselves Christians, could stand if they were brought to a Scripture measure, and a Scripture scrutiny? I trow not! Too much we do from custom, too much we take for granted, too much we do in servile imitation, which we *should* not do and *could* not do, if we searched the Scriptures more, and fashioned our lives according to what they required. If the opinions of the day are to be our guide, if the measure of man is to be our measure, if by the world's easy latitude we are to be finally acquitted or condemned, then with man's opinion and with the

world's balance might we safely weigh ourselves. But if God's revealed will is to be our rule, if we are to estimate our sincerity and our holiness by *its* standard, and if finally by *it* we are to be approved or condemned, then to the law and to the testimony, should be our constant appeal, to the evidence of the Gospel should be our constant reference; and we should be searching the Scriptures daily, to see if our thoughts, and deeds, and belief, and hopes *are so*, as we are taught of God they should be; lest we be deceiving ourselves, and find at last we "come short of the glory of God."

III.—We should search the Scriptures—for "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Our world is as the Bethesda-pool. At certain seasons the angel of God is sent to trouble the waters, that being troubled they may become healing; but we need guidance and direction that we may so use the troubled waters, that to *us* they may be medicinal. Now such a guidance we have in the Scriptures:—"My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him, for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth;" "but let patience have her perfect

work." Our wilderness-sojourning is full of perplexity at one season, and darkness at another; here a sea of difficulty roars before us, and there rocks and narrow passes shut us in; and we need, as Israel of old, a pillar to go before us to direct us by day, and to give light in the night season. Such a pillar have we in the Scriptures. Through them our darkness is turned into light, "and our heaviness into joy." Ever and anon as we journey onward, we come to some Marah with its bitter waters, and we need the prophet's branch to sweeten for us the spring; and such is the power of the Scriptures, it makes what is bitter sweet, and what is grievous easy to be borne, by throwing into the stream, and by lightening the burden with, this consolatory truth, "that all things work together for good to them that love God." And who has not felt in the season of nature's sore distress, when our hearts by human solace have refused to be comforted, who has not felt that there was a patience and a comfort in the Scriptures? What mother who has lost her child has not felt, as she *searched the Scriptures*, "it is well!" What mourner when the grave has been closed, and when the tear flows now but in private, all unseen, has not felt as *he searched the Scriptures*, that there was a depth of consolation there which could

soothe the pangs of the acutest separation? Who has not felt when disappointed and world-disgusted, that there was a better hope as *he searched the Scriptures*? Who, when the thought has fastened itself upon him that the world was passing away, and the things thereof, has not, as *he searched the Scriptures*, learnt to long for a brighter and a better world? Who, that has run the round of unsubstantial and temporal enjoyments, who has followed riches, and pursued fame, and listened to allurements, and given heed to lying promises, and been disappointed with them all—who, that in such a case has been led at length to *search the Scriptures*, has not found true riches treasured up in Christ, and sure promises through Him “exceeding great and precious?” And who, when sorrow has passed, and the face of heaven is no longer hid with clouds, and tears are dried—when he has *searched the Scriptures*, has not felt in the heart’s freshness and in its calm, resigned looking unto God—the fulness of that Scripture’s expression, “the clear shining after rain.”

IV.—We should search the Scriptures, because they have been given to us to be a “light unto our feet, and a lantern unto our paths.” We shall never do God’s will if we have it not always before us; once out of sight it is soon out of mind. We

need putting in remembrance. Things which we cease to see and hear, soon cease to impress us. We have need, therefore, to dwell constantly upon what God requires, and what he forbids. One strait and narrow line he has appointed us to walk in; from that we are to swerve neither to the right hand nor to the left; in that we are not to stumble—not to loiter—but are to seek to trace there the footprints of the Lamb of God, and walk in them. And to this end we need a constant light, not to illuminate our heads merely, and warm our hearts, but to guide our feet into the way of peace; to order our goings; to be a light and a lantern, to direct them by day and to preserve them by night. And such is God's Word. If we sin, it is not because we have not light to see what is sin; for the line is broad and well-defined between holiness and iniquity; and the light which shines upon that way is clear enough. But it is because knowing the way we will not walk in it; and having a light we will hold our hands before it, or even worse, quench it by presumptuously disobeying the truth.

But how does the text before us show us the Scriptures should be used. 1st.—*Searched*. The Bereans *searched* the Scriptures. Men search what they feel an interest in; their very searching

shows they are in earnest. Now we cannot be in earnest if we simply read a portion of our Bibles hastily, and coldly, as if we thought it a duty, and would discharge it on the easiest terms we can. But if our Bibles are truly our guide—and if using them as such, we diligently search them, we prove we are in earnest! Think for a moment. In our Bibles, truth stands as a directing-post—it points its fingers two ways; there may be plainly read there these solemn characters—these momentous words—**THE ROAD TO HEAVEN!** **THE ROAD TO HELL!** And if we are in earnest, think you shall we not be constantly looking, at every turn, for this guide-post, to see if we are in the *right* path—when the terminations of the two paths are so wide and so awfully asunder. Things which we earnestly desire and have not, we search for. Now many graces we have not, and many truths we have not; but be assured of this, if we are, without hypocrisy, desiring them, we shall search for them—and that search will be in God's Word.

2.—But the Bereans searched the Scriptures *daily*. It was a daily work with them, not a weekly work. And every good Christian will daily have his Bible in his hands. With this as his guide and comfort, will he begin each day—

and with this, as his peace and blessedness, will he close each day. A diligent traveller has his guide-book constantly before him—the learner in each profession, makes continual reference to his *Vade Mecum*; the careful tradesman has his journal, which *each day* must be kept, and opened. And shall Zion's traveller be less diligent—will the learner of godliness be less heedful? Will he whose business is with eternity, be so slothful in that business, as to keep no record of what he has done, and has yet to do? Believe it, as a certain truth—that heart and that household cannot be right, where God's Word is a strange sound, and where the precepts and promises of the Scriptures are not daily listened to! Better a house with small revenue, and that which is of great price, God's Word, there—than a house full of riches, and God's Word stifled there by their deceitfulness!

3.—Our Bibles should be read, with prayer for enlightenment. The Bereans searched the Scriptures daily, to see if the things spoken by Paul, were so. They compared spiritual things with spiritual. It is not our reading which profits, but our understanding what we read. And how can we understand, unless one teach us? And who shall teach us the mind of God, but God himself? And who shall be the interpreter of Scripture;

but he who was the inspirator to those who spoke, and penned what is written? The stars are ever shining in the heavens, but if a very small cloud is between us and them—all their brilliancy to us is as if they shone not; but let the cloud pass away, the mist be dispelled, and we gaze upon their lustre, and our thoughts are drawn heavenward by their loveliness. And so with the Scriptures. Bright truths shine as thickly there, as the stars in the firmament; but if there is a cloud between us and them, they shine there to us in vain. The Spirit of God must dispel the mist, remove the veil—they are no brighter in intrinsic lustre than they were—but to *us*, what was unseen before, is now clear and shining light.

4.—Our Bibles should also be read with frequent previous self-communion and examination, as to the effects of our reading. We often continue reading carelessly—because we seldom consider with how little profit we may have hitherto read. Now Scripture, the Apostle tells us, is profitable—and was written for our learning; but if we *profit* not, and *learn* not, then the Scriptures, as yet, to us have been in vain. Better a single verse pondered, learnt, felt, and applied by God's Spirit to our hearts, than a whole chapter read through, merely as a *portion*, when it is not the

heart's portion. The Scriptures are God's balances, wherein He weighs us, and whereby we should weigh ourselves; and we may be assured of this, if we weigh not ourselves, God not only weighs us, but finds us wanting.

Of old, wherever the ark of God went, it went not in vain; if it lodged with the enemies of God it left a curse there. And when it went to any of the people of God, the Lord blessed that house, as he did Obed-edom's, *for the ark's sake.* It is so still. The Bible is the ark of the covenant; the sacred depository in which God's word and God's truth are preserved; and where it rests, it rests not neutral and ineffectual. In one house, unopened, unread, neglected—God's finger writes in the dust, on its cover, CONDEMNATION; while, in another home, read—marked—learned—and inwardly digested—it is the soul's daily bread, and that household's daily blessing.

No Christian home should be without its Bible. Where God's Word is not, God is not. The blessing of peace abides where the message of peace is read. This is the true light in the dwelling; the soul's unfailing manna; the practical declaration there—"Thou God seest me!"

Nor is it only in our *homes* that we should have the Scriptures, but in our *hands.* The Bible is

not a talisman which needs but to be looked upon, and is too costly to be touched. Our God is better served when his Word is opened, and used, even though by using it becomes soiled and worn, than when it is carefully wrapt in its cover, and deposited in some family chest. The Sword of the Spirit is the Word of God; and in a world of temptation, the sword needs to be unsheathed, and in active service.

Our Bibles should also be in our *hearts*. That is a good old custom we in some places observe—texts of Scripture written on the walls of churches. We see them as soon as we enter there—and the eye constantly rests upon them. And so it should be with the Temple of God in our hearts. His Word should be written there. His truth inscribed there should bear testimony to his presence. And then, as the eye of conscience oft-times turned within, it would read this evidence of the truth and power of Scripture-searching and Scripture-remembrance—"Thy word have I hid within my heart, that I should not sin against thee."

ILLUSTRATION IV.

GOD UNKNOWN AND WORSHIPPED IN IGNORANCE.

"THEN PAUL STOOD IN THE MIDST OF MARS' HILL, AND SAID, YE MEN OF ATHENS, I PERCEIVE THAT IN ALL THINGS YE ARE TOO SUPERSTITIOUS. FOR AS I PASSED BY, AND BEHELD YOUR DEVOTIONS, I FOUND AN ALTAR WITH THIS INSCRIPTION, 'TO THE UNKNOWN GOD,' WHOM THEREFORE YE IGNORANTLY WORSHIP, HIM DECLARE I UNTO YOU."—Acts xvii. 22, 23.

A REVELATION from God is for the purpose of making God *known*. How strange that God should be *unknown* in his own world! That he should be near us and around us, and that "in Him we should live, and move, and have our being," and yet that, in the main, we should be ignorant of Him. Oh! this insensateness; this undiscerning blindness of our hearts, carries us below the poise of God's reasonable and reasoning creatures, and even fixes our position beneath the dullest of God's living things. "The *ox* knoweth his owner, and the *ass* his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

When we think in *one direction*, namely, that of human attainment in the knowledge of things present and temporal, we are wonder-stricken with man's greatness! When we contemplate him diving into the depths of science, and calculating the most abstruse computations; as a mechanist scheming out the most ingenious contrivances; as an analyst reducing the subtlest combinations to their simple elements; as a daring adventurer, scaling the loftiest mountains where God's thunders are—going down to the sea in ships, and occupying his business in the great waters—and not only familiar with the grandest and most august of God's works, but with the minutest, with every section of the living and material world, whether insect or animal, mineral or vegetable—thus thinking of him we are lost in wonder! But we are more lost when we think of him *in another direction*—namely, with reference to his true, and lasting, and eternal interests! Here for the most part he is *ignorance* itself. As far from the truth, as if truth were not revealed to him; and apparently as incapable of approaching such high things, as if there were no intellectual and spiritual capabilities for seeking after God! And we more wonder still, when we consider that it is man's self-sufficiency arising from his knowledge of *lesser things* which incapa-

citates him from enquiring into and attaining the knowledge of *higher things*:—"The world by wisdom knows not God."

Now just so was it with Athens of old. That renowned and polite city was the centre and attraction of intellect and learning. The pride of Greece, the university of the world. All that was grand in architecture—all that was illustrious in arts or arms—all that was accounted wisdom—had its birth, or at least flourished, there. Eminent for warriors, for statesmen, for poets, for philosophers, and attractive by its institutions, and laws, and literature, Athens as a metropolis—in elegance, in political importance, and in refinement was unrivalled. Her greatest men had advanced in knowledge as far as human intelligence and reasoning possibly could advance without a Revelation of God. Yet amidst all this prided wisdom, amid all this search and enquiry, how humiliating is it to our self-sufficiency to learn, that in this sage and curious city such a public acknowledgment of ignorance should subsist, as an altar with this inscription—to *an* unknown God, or rather to *the* unknown God.

But so it was. The Apostle having left Berea, waited at Athens for the companions of his journey, and while there "his spirit was stirred in him

when he beheld the city wholly given to idolatry." Paul knew well the repute of Athens; he could admire as much as any man its stately structures; he was not unacquainted with its literature; and doubtless knew the tenets of its leading sects. Its grandeur, its shining magnificence, its lofty Acropolis were all before him. But it was dark, dark to the Apostle; he gazed, but he gazed with sorrow; he looked on, but his spirit was moved with jealousy, not with admiration; for his God was not known there; there was nothing which told of Him; there was a seeming devotedness to what passed for religion, but it was not for the Lord of Heaven which he knew. *Athens with all its knowledge knew not God.*

Let me call before you this city now no more illustrious. It is high noon, and her active and bustling citizens are all astir. It is not trade, nor commerce which engrosses them—but a restless curiosity, a spirit of enquiry, they are full of questioning, to hear some new thing. The news-retailers are lounging in the forum; and each, as he meets his acquaintance, asks, what news? what news? Shall we wonder then, that there is a throng, and an increasing concourse, when a stranger, and he a man of eloquence, a man of zeal and earnestness, is in the market-place, setting

forth strange doctrines? The ear of Athens was delighted—her curious spirit was all alert—her would-be philosophers—the Epicureans, and Stoics, and Platonists—are asking, one of another, what will this babbler say? He has not been taught at Athens, what can he teach? Behold the Apostle undismayed—amid all the noise and tumult, stately and sublime, because a servant of the Most High God, glowing with love for Him, and burning to make Him known! But the crowd bear him onward—he must stand before the court of the judges. The learned council of Areopagus, of Mars' hill, whose office it is to weigh all matters of religious doctrines, must hear this strange teaching, and decide. Never, perhaps, did the Apostle stand before a more learned assembly—never was he listened to by such proud and captious listeners—and never did that illustrious court hear, since its institution, doctrines so divine, so truthful, so full of real and heavenly wisdom, as on that day.

An evangelist has described, and a painter, whose pencil was dipped in the hues of heaven, has pictured the scene. Bear with me, and pause to gaze on it. That centre figure, so full of zeal and earnestness, is the Apostle. What quiet composure, what perfect self-possession, what

consciousness of truth, what trust in His Lord is in his look and mien. So full of animation is his character, we almost hear his words. That figure, in the foreground, is Dionysius, an Areopagite, he is listening with open ear and open heart—he is hearkening for truth, and will find it. He will hear of Christ, and will believe. Behind is a pious woman, Damaris—she too is listening unto life. Hard by is a Stoic philosopher—self-complacent, and austere, he cannot receive the doctrine of a resurrection. And yon man of refined deportment, the polished scholar, who exhibits such perfect repose of mind and body—insensible to aught that can sway the passions, or alarm the soul—he is an Epicurean, and cannot conceive that any power above will interest itself in the concerns of men. And all that assemblage, that we may not further particularize, are men intent to listen, curious to learn, desirous to hear the arguments of this setter-forth of strange Gods.

What an audience for the Apostle! With what different looks is he gazed upon! But he remembers whose ambassador he is—he remembers the high mission on which he is sent—he remembers the idolatrous altar he has seen without—he remembers that there is a day appointed in which God will judge the world; and with these impressions on his

mind, he speaks :—"Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious," or (as we should more closely give his meaning) very pious votaries of religion. His opening address is conciliatory; he acknowledges their desire to reverence God if they knew Him. "For as I passed and beheld the Gods that ye worship, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." A God you are seeking; there is a God you acknowledge by your inscription you know not—*Him* declare I unto you. "God that made the world"—no fabled hero—no deified vice or virtue—no attribute of godhead personified as God—but the "God that made the world, and all things therein—*Him* declare I unto you. Seeing He is Lord of heaven and earth, He dwelleth not in temples made with hands—nor is he worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life and breath, and all things, and hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth; and hath determined the times before-appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He is not far from every one of us—for in Him we live and move and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have

said—"for we are also his offspring." What an appeal to the Athenians! How different from the disputing about words to no profit, to which they were accustomed! How grand a revelation of Him who inhabiteth eternity, and who ordereth all things both in heaven and in earth! How likely, too, to win an attentive hearing from the people by the mention and the testimony of their own poets! But the Apostle stops not here. He wished not merely to please, but to edify—not merely to attract, but to obtain belief—not merely to turn them from idol gods, but to make known to them the true God. "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised Him from the dead."

Now here we have the elements of the Gospel. The revealment of the true God; the intimation of Christ as the man whom God hath ordained to judge the world; the resurrection from the dead;

and an appointed day of judgment. And what was the effect of these truths? what was the power of this Gospel? Some mocked, it is true—the prejudiced—the self-wise—they with whom the wisdom of God was foolishness; but others were anxious to know more, to enquire further; “we will hear thee again of this matter.” While others “clave unto the Apostle and believed; among which was Dionysius the Areopagite, one of the judges; a woman named Damaris, and others with them.”

Now this subject concerns us, it may be, much more deeply than we suppose. It was not in Athens only that God was unknown, not in that refined city only that he was worshipped in ignorance. Athens is now in ruins! The Areopagus stands no more; the altar to the Unknown God is swept away. Before the light of the Gospel of truth, many a shrine, and oracle, and grove has trembled and disappeared. The temples of Jove have become hallowed ground to Jesus; and the doctrines proclaimed by the Apostle have been heard in almost every language under heaven. But God is still unknown, still ignorantly worshipped. Yes! even where the Gospel is preached! Yes! even where Christ is acknowledged! Yes! even where prayer is offered in his name! Yes!

even *here*, I fear, there are some to whom the Lord is an unknown God, and who with the appearance of worship, worship in ignorance! Does this sound strange! Does it fall upon your ears as harsh and uncharitable! I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say. Let us review together two or three different characters, and let us view them—when we have reviewed them—with the light of the Gospel, and I think we shall be constrained to confess that on many a heart devoted to some idol, the inscription is *To THE UNKNOWN GOD; and that its worship is the worship of ignorance!*

In proof of this I will take three characters, which the listening group around the Apostle suggests.

I.—*The man of learning*, whose learning is merely of this world. It may be that what he considers *wisdom* is *foolishness* with God. He knows not, perhaps, that the wisdom from above, God has hidden from the wise and prudent, and reveals unto babes. He may have yet to learn “that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” He may be diligent in tracing out effects and causes, he may be able to descant upon all the systems of belief which have obtained amongst men, he may even learnedly expound the

Scriptures in their general bearing, and in the letter ; but all this time the Scriptures in the spirit of them may be a sealed book, and he may have no inward and experimental knowledge that Christ "is the way, and the truth, and the life." And if so, he does not yet know God ; for God is only known through Christ, *He* must reveal *Him*. To *know* God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent is Life Eternal ; but the evidence that we are heirs to this life eternal is given by God's Spirit to our spirits, testifying that we have the Life of God in our hearts, and bearing witness that we are the children of God and taught of God. And if there is no such testimony—no quickening of soul by the Spirit—no evidences of life through Christ—no proofs that we are alive unto God—no *heart*-knowledge of Him, as well as *head*-knowledge—profess what we may, and let men think of us as they may—the Deists' God we may suppose we know, but the Christian's God we do *not* know. We may imagine we have reared an altar in our hearts to Him, but His eye reads there the cold, condemnatory inscription—to *the unknown God*. No spiritual sacrifice is there offered to Him ; no love, no zeal, no affiance, no trust ; with all our professed knowledge, His searching eye sees but learned foolishness ; and

in the very homage presented to Him, he is ignorantly worshipped.

II.—And so, too, with the mere curious man—the man of bustling, worldly spirit—whose eagerness is to hear some new thing. His mind is too distracted to be in earnest about *one* pursuit. He is carried away with every blast of vain doctrine. A mere rumor, a whisper of change, disturbs him. Credulous, he receives whatever presents itself; and whatever he receives, unsettles him. You shall find him in the week, it may be, full of speculation—giving an attentive ear to every novel scheme—easily borne away by a specious talker—full of the arguments of the last speaker—unstable in his opinions—wavering in his plans, readily influenced by any new undertaking, however wild and unaccomplishable. And if this be his character for six successive days, can he wholly lay it aside with the seventh? If this be his disposition with worldly things, will it not be so, to a certain extent, with spiritual things? Will he not bring to the contemplation of the things of God—will he not bring to the consideration of the truths of the Gospel—a mind somewhat distracted, and a spirit somewhat unsettled—and a heart whose soil is too light and shifting to receive permanently the engrafted seed of God's Word which is able

to save his soul? He is in the House of God, it may be, but where is His heart? On the last rumor—on the chances of success or failure—restless to know the last opinion in the last leading article of the favoured journal which is his oracle. Believe me, I am sketching no *person*, but a characteristic resemblance; the ideal of a large class of persons; and you know the sketch is life-like. And I ask of your hearts in faithfulness, think you that distractedness of character, that wavering of character, indicates a heart where God is known? Think you there can be such indecision, and yet God acknowledged as the all-present disposer of all things? Think you that the same mind can be cumbered, like Martha's, with many things; and yet, like Mary's, be in calm, quiet possession of the one thing needful—"A knowledge of the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent," and a firm reliance upon His promise, that "all things shall work together for good to those that love God?"

III.—In the indifferent man—the Stoic, apathetic character—the cold, chill, icy surface of whose heart is unruffled, or ungladdened either with sorrow or with joy—think you that there God is known? The true Christian spirit is "peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good

works." The Gospel teaches us to be kindly-affectioned, to be of the same mind one toward another, to "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." And if so, can the morose, and the churl, and the evil speaker, and the uncharitable, and the fault-finder, and the double-dealer, and he who feels not for another's woe, and the cold-hearted, and the unforgiving, and the envious, and the "whisperer who separateth chief friends," and he whose heart is a stranger "to the luxury of doing good" to his neighbour—can these know God, who in works thus deny him? Believe me, he who truly knows God, is known of God; Christ knows those who are of his fold, and He goes before them, and they follow in His steps; they learn the whole practical lesson of his doctrines—to love one another, as He loved them and gave himself for them. The great power of the Gospel is to work upon, and break down, our natural dispositions; to make a covetous Zacchæus charitable, and a persecuting Paul full of loving-kindness. And the strongest evidence that the God of the Gospel is known by us and worshipped by us, is that the Spirit of the Gospel influences our hearts, and exhibits itself in our practices. The idol of the natural heart is SELF—before it all must bend—to gratify it all must be

sacrificed; but when the grace of God dwells in the heart and rules there, the idol of self, like Dagon's image, falls prostrate, and is broken to a thousand shivers; and the heart's whole sacrifice becomes one of love to its Redeemer, and reflected from that, a love to all mankind. I leave you then to draw the conclusion—whether, in the heart which is unkind, and uncharitable, and unforgiving, the God of love, whom the Gospel reveals, is *not unknown*; and whether those who present themselves before the Lord, save with spirits of benevolence and brotherly love, are not worshipping in ignorance!

Now to these three characters let us show that there is a power in the Gospel of Christ to make *God known*.

1st.—*To the man of learning.* It is a paradox, but it is truth, “that the more a man knows, the less he seems to know;” and the more the line of his understanding is lengthened out to measure the depths of wisdom, the more profound he finds those depths to be, till he confesses with a philosopher of old:—“that all he knows is that nothing can be known;” or with a more modern philosopher, who had searched into the truth and nature of things more acutely, perhaps, than any mere man who ever lived:—“that he was at last but as

a child on the margin of the great ocean of truth, gathering here a pebble and there a pebble, but that the vast depths lay unexplored before him." The Son of David "gave his heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven;" and he came to this conclusion, "in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." Now let us suppose such an one thus wearied and disappointed in his pursuit of knowledge, opening his Bible and his eye directed to this text:—"the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;" and he pauses, and he finds that there is a Teacher whose aid he has not yet sought, and a spiritual enlargement of mind which he has not yet received. And he searches further, and he finds "if any man lack wisdom let him ask of God;" and he searches further still, and he finds that Christ is the *wisdom* of God as well as the *power* of God; and he lays aside all he has learnt before; compared with Scripture truth he considers it foolishness, he casts out from his thoughts all preconceived difficulties, all faithless questionings *how can these things be?* he becomes as a little child, simple and believing; he receives with meekness the engrafted Word; he submits

himself to it; he believes it to be God's truth, and his desire is to be taught of God; he weighs it with mere human teaching, and he is astonished at the contrast; he wonders at his former ignorance, he confesses that he knew not God's law aforetime, because his eyes were not open to see it. But now a glorious prospect is opened to his spiritual understanding. He learns, and finds he becomes wise by learning—wise unto salvation! He learns, and finds that his learning is transforming, for in the spirit of his mind he learns Christ and puts on Christ! He learns, and he finds studies of God's nature, and purposes, and love, such as engage the minds of angels, and higher intelligences. He learns, and he attains to what a sage of old thought the sum of all philosophy, to *know himself*. He learns, and he sees no limit to his learning; it stretches into Eternity; Futurity is opened to it; bright revelations of the world unseen break upon him; and his enlarged spirit is carried forward by the contemplation that though now he sees through a glass darkly, he shall yet see face to face. And thus is his soul drawn up to God. His conversation is henceforth in Heaven, and he longs for that day when, clothed upon with Immortality, he shall learn God in God's presence, amid a throng of adoring angels and the spirits of just men made perfect.

2nd.—The power of the Gospel is equally effectual in coping with the curious man, whose feverish and excited mind is ever on the stretch for some *new thing*. The very restlessness of man's mind oft-times carries him from object to object, from pursuit to pursuit, from plan to plan, till at last he rests himself in God. Just as a mountain-torrent which rushes turbidly from rock to rock, from precipice to precipice—here distracted in the dark ravine, and there hurried headlong in some rapid fall, till at length, after winding its peaceful way through vale and woodland, it rests and reposes in the calm, still lake, reflecting heaven on its breast. The mind which, hurried away with worldliness and world-seeking, was ever asking what news? what news? when it finds that the world cannot satisfy its seeking, may begin to ask in a *better* sense—"Who shall shew us any good?" And here the Gospel begins to work. Here—in its hopes and promises—the soul which, like the patriarch's dove, has winged its weary flight over a waste of waters and found no resting-place for the soul of its foot—may alight and still its panting breast. Disappointed in our speculations, we may find plans of a sure foundation here! With our worldly hopes all blighted, here we may find the "hope which maketh not ashamed." Harassed with

having wearied ourselves in a thousand ways in vain, here we may find *rest*—rest *unto our souls*! Wisdom crieth to us in the openings of the gates, in the city she uttereth her words—“How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity, and the scornors delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof; behold I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you!” O men of the world listen to her words! Listen to Him that calleth! If you hear God’s voice, harden not your hearts. Seek to be more than *men of this world*—strive to be amongst those who shall *inherit the world to come*! What are all your hopes if they are but built upon the sands? What is all your knowledge of the world if you are ignorant of God? What are all your purposes with Him who maketh the devices of men to be of none effect? And what is the end of all your seeking, if ye find not that which can *satisfy* and *save* the soul?

3.—Equally adapted is the power of the Gospel to transform and christianize the heart of the cold and the indifferent. *Self-love* is *nature’s* law. But *love for God*, and *love for one another*, are the effects of that *grace* which enlarges and transforms the heart. That breast must be cold indeed and selfish indeed, which can receive as truth, that

Christ in redeeming us pleased not himself—and that the Father “so loved us, that He spared not his own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all,” and yet can enfold and encase itself in its own narrowed gratifications, and interests, and necessities! The love of God *constraineth* us, says the Apostle. There is a greatness and a power in it which shames out selfishness, and draws and persuades us to self-denying and well-doing. The lovely teaching of the Gospel—that which has made it a philanthropic boon and blessing to the world—is “bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ!” Now let the most narrow-spirited man hear and believe “by grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God”—and is it possible, with a sense and a belief of such unspeakable love exhibited, and such measureless mercy received, that he cannot be kindled into love, and melted into mercy? I know no greater proof that the Gospel is of God, than that wherever it is truly practised, it calls down this astonished acknowledgment on those who profess it:—“See how these Christians love one another.” A Christian without love! A Christian without feeling and sympathy! A Christian without that diffusive tenderness of spirit which makes him compassionate!

A Christian without benevolence and beneficence, and all those amiable charities which characterize the soul in which the love of God is shed abroad! A Christian, in fine, without that kindly affection which is a necessary and implanted principle of his redeemed and renewed nature! You may as well talk to me of a sun without light—of life without the unseen power that keeps it in being—or of fire which freezes when it should melt the substance in the furnace where it burns. The very first condition and requirement in following our Redeemer is to *deny ourselves*—and the disciple whom Jesus loved, thus summed up the will of God—“This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.”

Men and Brethren, called by the holy name of Christians! Oh! weigh well how far you deserve the name!—How far you adorn it! Look closely to your inmost hearts. Is the love of God like a pure flame, burning on the altar there? Or is there no fire, and no sacrifice, and no sweet savour—only a dull, cold, seeming altar, with this self-accusing inscription, to the *Unknown God*! I pray you commune with those hearts. Be wise and learn how the case really stands

with you! You cannot be dissemblers with God—dread to be dissemblers with yourselves! Ask, is God known and worshipped within? The living God, the Redeeming God, the Sanctifying God? And if known, how known? Known as all you can desire? Known as making you holy as He is holy? Known as Christ in you the hope of glory? Known as establishing His kingdom in your heart—“righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?” Known not only as a reconciled God, and a pardoning God, and a justifying God—but as a God who is carrying out his work for you, and within you, and making you more and more “meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light?” Oh, what words, or what tongue, or what utterance can convey the importance to you of *now* knowing God! What earnestness, what entreaty, what vehement desire can sufficiently exhort you, if *He is not known*, “to acquaint yourselves *now* with Him, and be at peace!” Remember, I pray you, that though you may have deemed yourselves free from crime—that, in God’s sight, ignorance of Him is crime, and such as will not be unpunished:—“The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God.” And remember, too, that if God is not *now* known, the day is hastening when he

must be known—known as the Judge of quick and dead—when every eye shall see Him—
 “Revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.”
 2 Thess. i. 7—10.

ILLUSTRATION V.

THE CORINTHIAN HEART MADE THE TEMPLE OF GOD.

“KNOW YE NOT THAT YE ARE THE TEMPLE OF GOD, AND THAT THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELLETH IN YOU? IF ANY MAN DEFILE THE TEMPLE OF GOD, HIM SHALL GOD DESTROY; FOR THE TEMPLE OF GOD IS HOLY, WHICH TEMPLE YE ARE.”—1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.

WHEN our first Parents sinned, and fell from their original righteousness, the image of Himself in which God created them, was marred and broken. The fruitful earth—cursed for man’s sake, and bringing forth, to increase his toil, thorns and thistles—was not laid half so waste as man’s curst and wilderness heart; nor were the first guilty pair—when with longing, lingering gaze they looked upon the cherub-guarded gates of Eden now closed against them—fellow-partakers of so great, so severe a loss in being deprived of those blissful scenes, as they knew at that moment when they were first conscious they had lost their *innocence*, and could no longer, as they had done, talk with God.

Man's heart cannot be an empty thing. It was created vast and capacious enough to contain God! Not only was God's impress there, but God's presence—and when God's presence was there man's heart was *a lesser heaven*. But when guilt shook that heart to the centre, and crumbled the lovely fabric which was once there, God left it—it lay in ruins and desolate, but not empty—Sin's infected atmosphere poured in through every chink and cranny; it became now a lesser *hell*; and what had been formed by divine workmanship a temple to God, became “the habitation of devils, and the hole of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.” (Rev. xviii. 2.) And man, with reference to his soul's estate, as well as in regard to his Paradisal forfeiture, had to sigh in bitterness:—“The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us that we have sinned.” (Lam. v. 16.)

But God cared for his own workmanship though in ruins! He gazed upon the immaterial temple of man's soul, as His servants afterwards gazed upon the material temple raised to His name, when they “thought upon its stones, and it pitied them to see it in the dust.” And His counsel was to restore the polluted sanctuary. To wrest it by the workings of his grace and power from the unhallowed vileness which desecrated it. And

once more to inscribe there by the finger of His Spirit—"HOLY TO THE LORD." And this is the end of man's Redemption—this is the great reconciliation the Atoner had to perfect—to bring man's heart back to God, and to bring God back to man's heart! This is the perfecting of His work! Let us consider it with reference to a people whose very name is synonymous with uncleanness; and show that the Gospel of Christ was powerful to make *the Corinthian heart a temple to God!*

Ancient Corinth was not only one of the most celebrated, but also the most opulent city of Greece. Seated upon an isthmus, between two seas, with ports commodious for traffic with the east and west, Corinth was the resort of merchantmen; and into it they brought not only the wealth, but all the luxuries of the world. All that was lavish and voluptuous was centred there. It was a city of delights—the emporium of blandishments. Its rich, unclouded sky hung over a city basking in brightness. Here stately temples and palaces—there amphitheatres and porticoes; on another side, groves and cool baths, and shades which wooed to repose; and farther still, many a harmonizing structure, with its graceful columns and its flowery Corinthian capitals. Its statues were almost numberless. It was in itself a collection of art, and

taste, and splendour. And from its wealth, and lovely site, and cultivated excess of refinement, it received the merited appellation, *the eye or luminary of all Greece*.

But its luxury soon sunk into lasciviousness; and its refinement to the most dissolute depravity; and the Greek word which we may translate *to play the Corinthian*, was used to express every act of lewdness and profligacy.

Yet here Saint Paul preached—and though opposed by the blaspheming Jews who dwelt in the city, turning to the Gentiles, he found, even in that concentration of debauchery, listeners not a few; for we read, “many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized.” And such a desire appears to have been manifested there for the purifying truths of the Gospel, that the Apostle tarried there a year and six months; and while there, founded a most flourishing Church, and when absent, wrote to it two of his longest Epistles.

How truly was the Son of God and His Gospel manifested to destroy the works of the devil! Nothing could be more carnal, sensual, devilish than the Corinthian heart! At Corinth vice was worshipped; and of its abandoned citizens it may truly be said—“their prayers were turned into sin,” for their petitions were for the gratification

of their lusts! Immorality was their professed pursuit—"and their glory was their shame." All that was manly, and noble, and of good report there dwindled and decayed. Spurious pleasure, and the most enervating effeminacy prevailed. Chastity, drawing her veil around her, fled from its guilty shores. The blush of modest shame had heightened into the fixed and deep-stamped seal of unshrinking baseness; and an honest name, and good report, and pureness of character were a jeer and a laughing-stock to her profligate inhabitants, contaminated with filthy minds, and warped with the most depraved desires. This lovely city was an earthly Pandemonium; hell's revelry kept there a holiday unbroken; the meshes of sin's snare needed not to be hidden and disguised; there was an open and acknowledged allegiance to the Prince of Darkness; "they were taken captive by the devil at his will."

But when the Gospel was preached there the strong man armed could no longer keep his palace, because the stronger than he overcame him. Upon souls which were darkness itself the marvellous light dawned, and they became "light in the Lord." To hearts which were *enmity* to God, the ministry of reconciliation was plied, and the captive was released from his spiritual thralldom, and

rejoiced in the glorious "liberty wherewith Christ made him free." And what did the Corinthian converts become? St. Paul tells us:—"they were sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be Saints; that they were enriched in all utterance and in all knowledge, and came behind in no gift waiting for the coming of Jesus Christ." After enumerating the most revolting crimes which they of their city committed, he says, and "such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." He further writes to them:—"our hope of you is steadfast," and "ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men. Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us." The expression of our text, "that they were the Temple of God," he mentions not once only, but again and again; and he asserts concerning them, that the Word he preached was "mighty through God; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." How utter a transformation! What a perfect re-creation of heart! That heart was not "only without form and void before, but darkness was upon the face of the deep." Yet

the almighty Word was heard there, and that heart was created in Christ Jesus unto good works. And the Spirit with his enlightening and quickening influences moved there, and the chaos became order, and the darkness light, and the soul which was a stronghold of Satan—a temple to the living God.

Now how can the Corinthian heart, before its change—and how can every natural heart which is the palace and stronghold of sin and darkness—be more forcibly delineated than by the instance of the demoniac mentioned by the Evangelists. Every heart, which is the slave of sin, is *possessed*. Satan's grasp is on it. At first it scarce feels the soft and silken cords of sin, but by degrees the tempter, soon the tyrant, adds the fetter and the chain—and the heart, in its writhings to be free, feels it is in his iron gripe. And ever and anon he lulls it with slumber; and if it is alarmed he cries "peace, peace;" and he leads it, as he led the demoniac, to the tombs; and there its fellowship is with the dead; and it toys with seeming shadows which have no life, and like some idiot thing it tosses in its vacancy and play a hollow skull and dry and withered bones, and knows not the hideous pastime in which it is engaged. And thus it is in Satan's power, and Satan's strong delusions; and

the arch-fiend looks on in quiet complacency at its easy recklessness, and chuckles to his fellows:—"it is joined to idols, let it alone." But the name of Jesus is heard; and at that name Satan's kingdom trembles! The name of Jesus is heard; and the echo reaches the poor wretch among the tombs, and he steals forth and listens. He trembles before Him who came to overthrow the works of the Devil, and implores Him to torment him not. Here is the soul aroused—the soul alarmed, the soul imploring. The demon-stricken felt the power of Jesus—he felt the devils go out of him; and so the dispossessed soul, when the reign of darkness is broken up, and the light of Truth breaks in, knows and is conscious of the marvellous change. It has awoke from its sleep—it shudders at the very thought of the dead things with which it has made companionship; it follows after Jesus, learns of him, and like the healed demoniac, is henceforth "clothed, and in its right mind."

Or let us lay apart this figure, and gaze at the heart which is still in the uncontrolled power of sin! Draw aside the veil. Uncurtain its hidden recesses. Bring it to the light of God's Word. Strip from around it error and prejudice. And what do we see? A thrill of horror steals through

us at its coldness—there is no warmth there—no real life there. But what a crowd of shapes flit to and fro, and all hover round one engrossing form, the *peculiar idol of that heart*—the personification of its besetting sin. Vanity is there, and pride and profaneness and evil thoughts, and murmurings and discontent, and envy, and much uncleanness, and concupiscence, and hypocrisy, and fear, and carnality, and strife, and hatred, and jealousy, and revenge! And there is a hollow merriment which would fain look gay, but it cannot, because there are grim figures in the place—like those who of old held skulls in the Egyptian banquet-halls—to restrain all joy. And when the hour of temptation comes, what a stir there is within! And how active is each wrong passion and unrestrained indulgence! And what resistance can that heart make, when it has a thousand traitor inclinations in its stronghold, ready to betray it on the first assault? Oh, what a world is this human heart!—a “world of iniquity,” as the Apostle describes! What a troop of thoughts swarm in it! What hidden fires lurk beneath the embers of some seemingly-decayed and burnt-out lust! What passions are ready to burst out on the first incentive! How loud is the atheistic shout leading it to rebellion, and crying—*no God, no*

God! While amid all, and tyrannized over by all, poor conscience—a half blind, decrepit thing—is thrust aside; plunged down into some secret place; hoodwinked and manacled and tongue-tied; and if ever brought forth, it is like some wretched captive who has long pined in solitude—whose feeble limbs scarce bear him—and whose faltering tongue has forgotten how to shape itself to speech!

But it may be asked, do I so speak of every heart? God forbid. But such is the heart before the Gospel has been to it the power of God unto salvation. And even when that Gospel has worked there, there will be strong temptations:—"For the infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated; whereby the lust of the flesh, called in the Greek *phronema sarkos*, which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, and some the desire of the flesh, is not subject to the law of God."¹ Let me point out, therefore, *three* varieties of sin into which the Corinthians more especially fell; and let us search well our hearts, lest they may have fallen into the same snare.

I.—There is apt to linger within us, and it may only be detectable by the most anxious searcher

¹ Article 9th.

and discerner of his own heart—*much uncleanness*. And this will manifest itself in carnal thoughts, and wrong desires, and evil imaginings. We may abstain most scrupulously from the outward committal of sin; but we find there is a warfare to wage—that there is many a Canaanite still left in the land—that when we would *do* good, evil is present with us; and when we would *think* good, our thoughts run riot into sin. We are astonished, it may be, at the vile suggestions which spring up within us; and at seasons exclaim in bitterness:—“Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death.” And possibly there is no temptation which so strongly besets us as this of *carnality*. We are surrounded with all that is in the world, “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” By every inlet of sense we are assailed. If we go with David in the cool of the evening to the house-top, not even there are we free from temptation. Or if we betake ourselves to the city, like Lot, we shall be “vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.” 2 Peter ii. 7, 8.

II.—We should watch our hearts in reference to

another sin common amongst the Corinthians. That of *pride*, and more especially *spiritual pride*. The unconverted Corinthians were proud of the repute in which they were held for refinement and luxury; by them, as by many other of the Greeks, the rest of the nations were looked upon as *barbarians*; and they deemed there was no people worthy to be compared with themselves in taste and opinions. Even in the converted of the Corinthians, as we gather from St. Paul's Epistles to them, there was too much dependence on their learning; and therefore he warns them:—"Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." And again he writes:—"I fear lest when I come I shall not find you such as I would; lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults." Now all these are engendered of *pride*. And we are sure where pride is, God cannot be; for pride God hates; and the proud God resisteth. And our Lord, mentioning the evil things that come out of man, tells us—"from within out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, **PRIDE**,

foolishness : all these evil things come from within and defile the man." The power of grace is to make man humble ; to bring "down the high looks of the proud ;" and to mould us to that sweet disposition of the Psalmist :—"Lord, I am not high-minded, I have no proud looks. I do not exercise myself in great matters, which are too high for me. But I refrain my soul and keep it low, like as a child that is weaned from its mother : yea, my soul is even as a weaned child." The Philippians are exhorted "in lowliness of mind each to esteem other better than themselves." And Christ who is our example, was not only a pattern of all humility, but also thus instructs us :—"take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." Pride is no uncommon stumbling-block across the narrow way that leads to life !

III.—We are very open to be tempted to another besetting sin of the Corinthians, and that is *vanity*. Corinth was full of all that could administer to the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Beauty was there, and wealth, and wit, and learning. It was the resort of so-called taste and fashion. Vain-glory strutted there ; and ready Imitation played its antic tricks, copying every extravagance of the

passing day. And all this gave scope to *vanity*. Nor was the Corinthian Church by any means pure from it. The new converts, if they introduced not their customs, still appear to be strongly tinctured with their former tastes; and these they introduced into their holy things, and even by their excesses and vain show, desecrated the very Table of the Lord. And on this account the Apostle very sharply reproves them, and more than once speaks plainly to them, "Do I praise you in this, I praise you not;" and again and again finding fault with them, he affirms "I speak this to your shame."

And what need is there, brethren, that we should watch against this besetting temptation. The world around us is one vast vanity fair; and as strangers and pilgrims, it is hard to pass through it, turning our eyes neither to the right hand nor to the left. On this side Ostentation beckons to us, and there Emulation. In one quarter Fame blows her trump, and pointing to her hall of empty shadows, cries "here is Immortality." In another quarter Ambition says, stay not; look not behind; the summit for which you pant will soon be gained. And when we draw aside from this bewildering maze and sit in some spot meet for thought and holy musing, and look into our hearts, we find they have not escaped unhurt. If they entertain them

not within them, they are nevertheless casting many a sidelong glance to the follies through which they have passed, and it is long before we effectually learn that the *Life present* is but a vain shadow, and that only the things which are yet unseen are real, substantial, and eternal.

Now to be unattracted by the world's gauds, and to be able to counteract its temptations, and avoid the sins aforementioned, we should seek for an *utter change* of heart. God speaking to his apostate people of old, charges them by his prophet:—"O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee."—Jer. iv. 14. St. Paul, writing to the Romans, instructs them:—"Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." And writing to the Corinthians, he says more fully:—"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." It is with the heart, as with the waters and the land, which Elisha sweetened and made fertile. The waters naturally were bitter, and the soil barren, but when the Prophet cast in the cruse of salt, he added, "thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren

land." So it is with the heart. By nature the source and fountain are bitter, and the soil barren; but when the Grace of God is cast in there, the fountain is medicated and purified, and seasoned with salt; and the ground, no longer barren, brings forth fruit to God sixty-fold and a hundred-fold. We are too apt to judge of things and of ourselves, *outwardly*, and do not sufficiently look *within*. And perhaps we fall short of the Grace of God which bringeth salvation, by merely reforming our lives, and laying aside some long-cherished habits, and falling in with a few godly practices and appearances; and fulfilling what we consider as our measure of appointed duties. And yet lack one thing, and that is *the* thing, the thing needful—a *right heart*. Here grace begins. Its operations are first here; the fountain is cleansed, the main spring is rectified, and the healing waters flowing clean from the fountain become cleansing, and show their power in our thoughts, words and deeds. God's first demand is "my son give me thine heart." This he demands as the first-fruit offering. This he quickens and renews. This he requires us to keep with all diligence, as containing in it the issues of life. This He makes His dwelling-place; and by His Spirit reïmpresses with His own image,

which has been lost there, "sealing it unto the day of redemption."

Another thing for which we should earnestly watch and pray, is, that the Lord, by His grace, would mortify and kill all vices in us, and so root out "the motions of sin," that the flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may "offer our bodies to him a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God." Sin may be resisted—we may outwardly turn from it; and yet *within* its secret power may prompt, and its ungodly motions may disturb. *Thought-sins* are to be sought for and destroyed. These are the accursed Achans which defile the camp, and go undetected, until God arises to judgment; but when He enables us to search the heart, there we find them! Till then its dark places are full of these *thought-sins*. They are there as a nest of serpents' eggs; and like these must be crushed in the embryo, lest they assume life and power—and coil around and sting the heart which fostered them. Sin is the progeny of evil thought—not evil thoughts the consequence of sin. In fact, *evil ways* are nothing more than *evil thoughts* brought forth into acts. Sin has its beginning and rise not *without* us but *within* us. "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth

sin ; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Man is still a compound of the twofold elements of which he was formed. He was taken from the dust of the *earth*, but "*God* breathed into him the breath of life, that he should become a living soul." And he carries with him the daily manifestation of this compound—the unceasing warfare of the flesh against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh ; the carnal resisting the spiritual, and the spiritual the carnal. Without grace this contest is an unequal one—"*for we cannot do the things that we would ;*" and with grace the contest is more unequal still—for "*greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world.*" Oh ! for an increasing spirituality of mind and thought, and soul and heart ; and for desires so rectified and sublimated that they may ascend from a pure altar, and wing their upward course, like morning incense, till they lose themselves in heaven, and centre themselves in God.

Next let us cultivate a lowly heart—a heart weaned from the world's childish vanities. If a proud heart, God hates ; yet "thus saith the high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to

revive the hearts of the contrite ones." By meekness and lowliness and every disposition which tramples down pride, our hearts will be better fitted to become God's dwelling-place.

And whilst we are thus looking to our hearts, let us narrowly watch every *inlet* to our hearts. Let our *eyes* look straight forward; and when, as strangers and pilgrims, we pass through the world's vanity-prospects, let our thoughts and our prayers be with God:—"Turn away mine eyes, lest they behold vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way." Let our *ears* be shut to every empty and idle word; and, above the world's sounding brass and tinkling cymbal, let us hearken for the voice of the ever-calling Saviour, attracting us onward to himself, "as the way, the truth, and the life."

And above all, let us remember what the Apostle pressed upon the Corinthians:—"Ye are not your own, but bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." "Know ye not that ye are the Temple of God—His workmanship—created in Christ Jesus unto good works"—dedicated to Him—holy to Him. No sacrilege can be conceived equal to that of polluting and defiling the *spiritual temple*. On this sacrilege God himself takes vengeance:—"If any man defile the Temple of God, him shall

God destroy!" Oh! let us pray that this inner sanctuary may be kept holy to the Lord; that the Spirit of God may dwell there; that repentance may shed often there the bitter tear, and offer up its deep contrition; that faith and holiness, as humble worshippers, may there see God, and know God; that heavenly-mindedness, and holy thoughts, and good desires may there be implanted and strengthened; "that the very God of Peace may sanctify us wholly; and that our whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thess. v. 23.

ILLUSTRATION VI.

WORLDLY GAIN AN OPPOSITION TO THE GOSPEL.

“AND THE SAME TIME THERE AROSE NO SMALL STIR ABOUT THAT WAY. FOR A CERTAIN MAN NAMED DEMETRIUS, A SILVERSMITH, WHICH MADE SILVER SHRINES FOR DIANA, BROUGHT NO SMALL GAIN UNTO THE CRAFTSMEN; WHOM HE CALLED TOGETHER WITH THE WORKMEN OF LIKE OCCUPATION, AND SAID, SIRRS, YE KNOW THAT BY THIS CRAFT WE HAVE OUR WEALTH. MOREOVER YE SEE AND HEAR THAT NOT ALONE AT EPHEBUS, BUT ALMOST THROUGHOUT ALL ASIA, THIS PAUL HATH PERSUADED AND TURNED AWAY MUCH PEOPLE, SAYING THAT THEY BE NO GODS, WHICH ARE MADE WITH HANDS: SO THAT NOT ONLY THIS OUR CRAFT IS IN DANGER TO BE SET AT NOUGHT; BUT ALSO THAT THE TEMPLE OF THE GREAT GODDESS DIANA SHOULD BE DESPISED, AND HER MAGNIFICENCE SHOULD BE DESTROYED, WHOM ALL ASIA AND THE WORLD WORSHIP-PETH.”—Acts xix. 23—27.

WHEN we are wavering between Christ and the world, balancing between life and death, how easily does a little temporal advantage weigh down the scale, and sink us into worldliness. The Evangelist tells us, that on one occasion, when Jesus “had gone forth into the way, there came one running and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good master, what shall I do that I may inherit

eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God. Thou knowest the commandments, do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, defraud not, honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, one thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up thy cross and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great possessions." (Mark x. 17—22.) Alas! how frequently and fatally do we stumble at the same stumbling-block! We, too, would follow Christ! We would enter into eternal life! From our youth, it may be, we have externally observed the commandments. But a hindrance lies before us. We have lucrative advantages in prospect or possession; and these have so twined themselves with all our notions of satisfaction and prosperity—have so lured us into the false belief that they can obtain happiness for us, that it is hard to place them down to take up the cross! Hard to forego our treasures here to lay up treasures in heaven! So that it is not

only from Demetrius and the craftsmen of Ephesus, but from the almost daily testimony of our own hearts, that we learn that *worldly gain is an opposition to the Gospel*. That this was so with the Ephesians a few words in addition to our text will amply show.

Ephesus, in the time of the Apostle, was a very flourishing city, the most attractive and opulent of Asia Minor. Only inferior to Athens in learning and refinement; and to Corinth in its external grandeur; it surpassed them both in the workmanship and magnificence of its Temple to Diana, which was deservedly esteemed one of the world's wonders. All that kingly riches could lavish, or the Sculptor's art devise, or cunning craftsmanship execute, or superstitious munificence dedicate, was found there. Not that St. Paul saw that Temple in its first grandeur. That had passed away. The fire of one night brought low what two hundred and twenty years had raised. Yet in the Apostle's time there was a costly temple; and in consequence of its far-spread report, it would appear that the dwellers at Ephesus and strangers who resorted thither purchased models of this Temple, silver shrines in imitation, it might be, of some inner sanctuary, or even representations of the presiding goddess. For these there was a great

demand. They found employment for many craftsmen and artificers; and they brought no small gain to those who wrought and trafficked in them. But while Paul was at Ephesus and the region round, so unwearied was he in proclaiming that the name of Christ was "the only name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," that we learn that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord Jesus; many that used curious arts (for which Ephesus was famous) believed and confessed, and shewed their deeds, and burnt their necromantic books; and thus "mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed."

But we do not find that here, as at Athens, the philosophers stood up and encountered the Apostle; nor that, as at Corinth, he was accused before a careless Gallio for "persuading men to worship contrary to the law." It was neither learning nor prejudice with which he had now to contend, but Mammon. The opposition he met with was not for proclaiming the true God, but for denying the God of this world. Demetrius the silversmith, whose idolatry for Diana appears to have been instigated, or at least, strengthened by his idolatry for the pelf which her superstition brought to him, began to calculate what the results of Paul's preaching would be; and came to the

conclusion that if Jesus was worshipped there, Diana must be overthrown; and if Diana was overthrown, that her Temple would become neglected and despised; and if so, that there would be no desire, and no market for the articles of his craft. He did not consider it as a matter of right or wrong, whether Diana's worship was truth or falsehood, whether the religion which Paul preached was prevailing because it was of heaven; but he thought of his gains being stopped—of his calling coming to nought—of the resources of his wealth being all at once cut off. Mammon in fact was *his* deity, his idol—not Diana. No veneration for the goddess prompted him—no scrupulous superstition for her worship, but the secret whisperings of Mammon, that *her* temple and *his* trade had one common interest; that they would stand or fall together; and that the worship of the one and the wealth of the other must alike be done away, if these new doctrines were received, which declared “that they were no gods which were made with hands.” This very probable conjecture having engaged the more far-seeing or more selfish mind of Demetrius, he thus sets himself at once to incite others. They had not seen, it may be, the matter in the same light; they may even have thought that a new religion would require new

shrines ; at least they appear to have been easy in the matter ; therefore he calls them together, he does not scruple to speak of the thing as a matter of profit and policy ; he reasons with them "Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth," but if this doctrine gain ground that they are no gods which are made with hands, then "not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought ; but also that the Temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised."

There is no mistaking, therefore, what hindered at Ephesus the receiving of the Gospel—there is no question what it was which filled these silver-workers with wrath—we can ascertain clearly enough why they would try to prevent all persuasion to the truth, by crying, for two whole hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians !" Their interests were closely allied with her worship ; their gains very mainly depended on the superstitious veneration of her temple !

Will you bear with me, if I say that a similar opposition has prevailed from that day to this. If we consider how widely the Gospel was preached by the Apostles, and those who immediately followed them—if we consider how mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed, and what rapid changes it wrought in the then heathen world—

we are astonished that the happy age has not come round, when "the bells upon the horses' necks shall be holiness to the Lord," and when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." But how has the case been? The Gospel has had to encounter self-interest, and unjust gains, and wealth gotten by wrong, and much godless traffic; and in every age, and every nation, and every town, there has been some Demetrius, who has shown that if the truth of God is received, and acted upon, this craft and the other craft must come to nought. The question, alas! has not been, and is not—is such the Revelation of God? and is such the teaching of the Gospel of Christ? But, how can it be done? It will break in upon worldly interests; it will withhold us from profits and acquisitions which we cannot forego. We tamper, I fear, with plain Scripture words and commandments—we strain, and twist, and pervert them, that they may seem to allow our continuance in what God fully declares is contrary to his will. The excuse, that if we do not act so, our gains will come to nought, seems plausible enough; and if we only get those of the same calling to side with us, or a temporizing world to countenance our proceedings, or the sanction of some perverted authority to

strengthen us, we forget, perhaps, that like the Ephesians, we are crying up some idol worship; and keeping truth in its saving effects from our own hearts, because a worldly self interest will not let it enter there!

A little plain consideration will convince us whether it be really so or no. What in our daily lives is the great object of our pursuit? For what is it that we rise up early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness? Why are we so cumbered and anxious—wearying our thoughts by day and by night—toiling with head, and hand, and heart? What is it we are seeking for? Not for the mere supply of life's necessities—not that having food and raiment we may be therewith content; but for some further gains—to lay up treasures—to amass and realize what we may call our own. Do not mistake me! I am not condemning foresight and prudence, and the providing things honest in the sight of all men. The teaching of Christ's Apostle is clear enough, that:—"If any man provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." The question I am now asking, is simply this—what is the great object of all the industry, nay more, the anxiety and self-weariness, and restlessness which we see

around us in the daily activity of the commercial world? I suppose the answer will not be disputed—GAIN! What but this leads one across the stormy ocean, to every port and country of the world which enterprize has discovered! What but this leads another to let Spring and Summer, and Autumn and Winter pass round without entering into the enjoyment of their sweet vicissitudes, because he fondly thinks his business will not let him lose a day? What but this keeps one at the monotonous daily round of labor's wearying wheel—and another so absorbed in his peculiar occupation, that he foregoes for it all the sweetest attractions and associations of his home? Surely it is not the simple feeling of being industrious—of performing the allotted tasks assigned to us—of fulfilling the early sentence and curse upon our rebellious race—"of eating bread with the sweat of our brow"—there is something beyond this—some more secret spring, some more powerful inducement—something which seems to promise a greater reward; and it is—GAIN!

A further and more important question then arises—may this desire after gain become sinful? May it have the same effect upon us as it had upon the Ephesians—that of counteracting the saving influences of the Gospel?

Shall I speak truth, or shall I forbear? Shall I, who have to watch for your souls, as one who must give an account—say to those souls—“take your ease, you have much goods laid up for many years”—when this night the startling summons may break in upon you—thy soul is required? I will not! I dare not! I can better brook your living censure, and the charge of severity, than your dying accusation, and the charge of faithlessness! Oh! believe me, I have but one desire:—“the saving of myself, and those who hear me!”

Worldly gain, then, is sinful, and it counteracts the influences of the Gospel, if it hinders us in the pursuit of heavenly things, or in the discharge of any Christian duty. God’s first demand is as plain as it is peremptory:—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.” Christ’s teaching cannot be mistaken but by wilfulness; “Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” And if our minds are so engrossed—if our affections are so set on earthly things—if the demands upon our time and thoughts are such that God is not remembered, that *He* is not in our thoughts, that no time can be given to Him—then our gains, however great, are becoming our snare, and must yet “pierce us through with many sorrows!” “Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God,” says our Redeemer—but if, in

seeking other things, that remains *unsought*—if, in pursuing other things, that is left behind—if our *carefulness* of things present creates and strengthens a *carelessness* for things to come—if our gain of the world is the loss of Heaven!—what shall we then say? Not only that we are as far as possible from fulfilling the commandment of Christ, but also that whilst “we think we are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; we are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.”

Our worldly gains, moreover, are sinful, if they are to our neighbour's hurt, whether by deceit and dishonesty, by over-reaching and monopoly, by exacting and oppression—or, by whatever administers to sin. The great principle of all relative Christian duty—and that which is calculated to make the doctrines of the Gospel the greatest blessing to mankind—is, that it puts each man in the position of his neighbour, and requires at his hands—“Do unto others as you would they should do unto you.” Only let this as a general rule be carried out, and we should need no detail of minor duties. This at once discountenances all *deceit and dishonesty*. He is not doing to others as he would they should do unto him, who equivocates, and takes advantage

of another's ignorance—and says with his lips what he knows in his heart to be not so; and who by any trick or false-dealing increaseth that which is not his. It equally discountenances *over-reaching and monopoly*! for he is not doing to others as he would they should do unto him—who whilst he is desirous to live will not let live; but who would absorb into himself—as into a monstrous gulph which cannot be filled—that which whilst it satisfies not himself, might have blessed thousands! It equally discountenances *exacting and oppression*! for he is not doing unto others as he would they should do unto him—"who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work;" but the Apostle distinctly tells him what he is doing:—"Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." And it equally discountenances *whatever administers to sin*. The teaching of the Gospel is that we should further one another in

holiness. "That each one should please his neighbour for his good to edification." "That we should be not *partakers* of other men's sins"—"that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in another's way." Oh! how changed would the course of this world be, if each one thus followed the teaching of the Gospel!

But worldly gain may become sin to us, and more than sin—our destruction—by leading us to *trust* in uncertain riches. What is the practical bearing of the Covenant of Redemption? To lead man to believe in God—to trust in Him—to make Him his confidence—Him his hope—Him all that he needs, or can desire! Every one of the Lord's dealings with us is to the same end. He takes all from us, that we may find all in Him! In becoming our reconciled Father, He requires in us a child-like dependence. All His invitations are "Look unto me!" "Come unto me!" "Call upon me!" The world has estranged us from Him, and He would draw us back to himself from the world! Whatever short of Him we trust in, becomes an idol filling His place—encroaching upon the love which should be His—and drawing from Him those souls which He has loved with an everlasting love. I speak reverently, when I say, "God is jealous over us." He brooks no

rival in our heart's deep affections ; but demands that its spiritual longings should be centred all in Him. Now we cannot serve God and Mammon ! We cannot be trusting in riches, and yet trusting in God. We cannot at one and the same time make both our *confidence*. Either God in the heart will drive out covetousness, or covetousness in the heart will drive out God. Many a rich man would strive to enter heaven, if he could carry his riches with him ; but few are prepared to lay down those riches, and in the place of them to take up the cross of an humble and suffering Saviour. The great fear is lest riches usurp God's place. This is why our Saviour speaks so solemnly concerning them—why he has fenced the acquisition of them with these startling words—"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God !" Their tendency is certainly this, *to usurp God's place* ; in fact, to become a god to us—to frame themselves into golden chains, to chain us to the earth—to become an entangling snare, and a pressing weight ; and so to captivate us, that we cannot see that they are ours but for a little season—that they will soon change hands—that the wealthiest of us can "carry nothing away with him when he dieth ;" that no silver can bribe off

corruption, and no gold be given as a ransom at the judgment-bar of Christ.

But if the love of gain counteracts the influence of the Gospel—the Gospel, where it is received, also becomes the power of God unto salvation, in restraining the love of gain.

I.—Inasmuch as the Gospel presents all things in a new light, so that the things which were once *gain* to us these we count *loss* for Christ, when His truth shines into our hearts. The things of heaven which were once dim and distant and uncertain, scarce influencing us, or obtaining but an occasional thought, become *now* near, attractive and absorbing; while the things which once held us with most tyrant grasp, we feel to be powerless through that faith which overcomes the world! We begin now to “see Him who is invisible.” It is with us as with one who stands upon some mountain-eminence, with the mist of morning overhanging all things. He for a time sees nothing clearly, all is cold, and comparatively colourless. But the hazy curtain is withdrawn—the thin clouds curl upward—the sun’s slant beams fill the wide scene with glory, and he is amazed to find that he was in the midst of so much loveliness, and could see it not. And just so it is to that heart to which Faith is unfolding its bright revealings. Once all

was dark, and cold, and cloudy. It could see nothing around it, no bright view stretching out before its gaze—a mist enveloped all things. But at length the vain shadow has passed away, it sees things now which were before unseen, prospects of glory open out to it, and we wonder that we have so long lived and lived in vain! Henceforward we see what true gain is—to gain Christ! Henceforward we learn where true riches are “treasured up in Him.” There is a strong attraction now drawing us to him—“the love wherewith he hath loved.” Through Him we feel that all things are possible; and that by his grace helping us we can “esteem,” as Moses did, “the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, having respect unto the recompence of the reward.” Heb. xi. 26.

II.—The power of the Gospel further restrains the love of gain, in that it causes us to forego whatever acquisition of wealth is unlawful in the sight of God. We find that when St. Paul preached at Ephesus, “many of them which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.” Their gains they found to be ungodly, and as such they altogether ceased from them.

The question with them was not how can we live if we give up these things—but how can we please Christ if we do not give them up. And, believe it, dear Christian people, if we are in earnest—if the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts—we cannot continue in unlawful gains, or the gains of ungodliness. Even the guilty Judas, when his conscience was pricked, could not keep his silver pieces which were the price of blood—but threw them down before those who bribed him. The great proof of our sincerity is the sacrifice we will make for Christ's sake. For this the first disciples gave up all things; houses, brethren and sisters and mothers and children and lands! For this Matthew left his lucrative seat of custom, that he might follow Him who had not where to lay his head! For this the penitent woman parted with the most costly gift, when she broke the alabaster ointment box, that she might pour it upon the head of Him who forgave her much! Gains of ungodliness are Satan's service-money—the hire with which he hires us to rebel against God; but let the heart once become a servant unto Christ—and it cannot receive the price of sin. However great the temptation, it will be resisted! However large the bribe it will be withstood; and the heart will seek for faith to

endure reproach and poverty and loss with the gain of Christ; but will shrink with unspeakable horror at the very thought of again committing the Judas-sin—*selling Christ for a few pieces of silver*.

III.—The Gospel of Christ further counteracts our love of gain, in that it constrains us to make restitution of what is “gotten by wrong.” Zacchæus was an extortioner—much he had probably gained by exacting more than was due, and by oppression and hard-dealing. But as soon as Christ’s Word reached his heart—what a change do we trace there! Christ did not say a word about his past dealings—there was no verbal reproof for the wrongs which he had done—but Zacchæus was condemned by his own heart, and out of the fulness of that heart he uttered:—“If I have done any wrong to any man, I restore fourfold.” And without this there cannot be sincere repentance. We cannot set our houses right, or our hearts right, while the unclean thing is there! Justice cries *give back*, before Mercy whispers *go in peace*! True penitence is not only in *words*, but in *deeds*! The self-deceiver, who has not given up what is not his, may say with the guilty King of Israel:—“I have performed the commandment of the Lord;” but what will be the answer?—“What

meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" What meaneth the still retaining that which is the wages of iniquity? Years may have gone on since some fraud was committed—since some unjust gain was acquired—since some unpaid debt was contracted—perhaps mankind never knew it—but God did! And now years have gone by, and the statute of human limitation, it may be, has been pleaded, but there is no such limitation with God. So *many* years may have passed, that probably *we* ourselves have forgotten the transaction. But, even so, believe me, it defiles the house, and defiles the heart. A perfect blessing and perfect peace cannot come there. Like the exiled Jacob, we are receiving, it may be, plague on plague, sorrow on sorrow, trouble on trouble; and cannot possibly discern why it is so. We may wonder what it is which keeps us wanderers, and will not let us rest. And perchance it is, because the strange gods are not put away from our households—because some Laban's stolen images are there. And they must be given up; restitution must be made; the unlawful acquisition must be paid back to the uttermost farthing; or there will be no full peace with God.

IV. But there is still a more solemn manner

in which the Gospel of Christ counteracts the love of gain. By urging on us that solemn question, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

Oh! Sirs, dear as our gains may now seem to us, what will they profit us! in that day when our hearts condemn us if they have been unjustly gained? What will they profit us! when grey age and feebleness creep on us—and our wants are narrowed to the scanty limits of the old arm chair, and the little which worn-down and decayed nature requires? What will they profit us! when in the wandering recollections of dotage we recall the sins of our youth, and like mighty shadows of the past, they come up, as the prophet before Saul, wrapt darkly in a mantle, affrighting us the more with the mysterious indistinctness which enfolds them? What will they profit us! when the whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint, and we lie languishing on the bed of the last sickness? What will they profit us! when the warning-voice tells us to put our house in order, and we understand by that warning that now we must part with all, and give up all? What will they profit us! when the mourners go about the streets, and we can carry nothing with us but the shroud and narrow shell in which we are encoffined? What

will they profit us! when in our silent graves we know not who shall gather them, and some spend-thrift hand scatters in a few days, all the amassed earnings of the toil and anxiety of a distracted life? What will they profit us! when we stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and find that in God's Record Book there is no account of talents improved and of treasures laid up in Heaven? And what will they profit us! if, on the uttering of the dread sentence, we hear—alas! too late!—that, in gaining that which now rises up to condemn us, *we have lost our own souls!*

Christian brethren, partakers of the common calling—in all your prosperity, seek that your gains may be so ordered, so used, so considered, that in their acquisition the Lord and giver of all good may bless your increase. There is a gain which is honourable and safe, the blessing of God on honest and straightforward industry; for while “wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished; he that gathereth by labour shall increase.” There is a way of gain which has quiet and assurance; and it is by humbly waiting upon the Lord for his blessing on all we put our hands unto: “Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in Him: and he shall bring it to pass. He shall make thy righteousness as clear as the light, and thy just dealing

as the noon-day." There is a gain which the Christian knows, which is to him beyond all wealth, his unfailing manna in the wilderness, and the assurance that he shall lack nothing. It is that "Godliness which with contentment is great gain." The crying evil of our day, and that which has brought such panic and distress upon us is, that men will *hasten* to be rich, forgetting that thus saith the Lord:—"He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him."

We are passing through things *temporal* to things *eternal*. The former are near us and glittering; the latter are distant and unseen. Treasures may be laid up for the one and for the other, but the treasures upon earth must die with us; the treasures in heaven shall endure throughout all ages. The treasures upon earth, the rust and moth can corrupt; the treasures in heaven cannot tarnish or decay. The treasures here below, thieves may break through and steal; the treasures above are reserved in heaven for us! Oh! may our desires be so rectified, and our goings be made so direct, that neither the splendour of anything that is great, nor the power of anything that is attractive, may lead us to forgetfulness of God, but "may we so pass through things temporal that we finally lose not the things which are eternal."

ILLUSTRATION VII.

THE WEIGHT OF PRESENT SUFFERING LIGHTENED BY THE GOSPEL.

"I RECKON THAT THE SUFFERINGS OF THIS PRESENT TIME ARE
NOT WORTHY TO BE COMPARED WITH THE GLORY WHICH
SHALL BE REVEALED IN US."—Rom. viii. 18.

WHEN St. Paul wrote his Epistle to those who were in Rome, "called to be saints," he had not, as far as we can conjecture, visited the "Imperial City." And possibly at that time he little imagined that within five years, he should be there called upon to "rejoice in his sufferings, and fill up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ!" But when he at length stood in that city "an ambassador in bonds," ready to be offered, and knowing that the time of his departure was at hand; and when at his first and second hearing before Nero's judgment-seat, "no man stood with him, but all men forsook him;" how nobly and how faithfully did he exemplify what he had before written to the persecuted Church at Rome:—"That he reckoned that the sufferings of this present time were not worthy to be compared with the glory which should be revealed in him!"

St. Paul having visited, not in mere curiosity, but as the Preacher of the Cross, the chief cities of Asia and of Greece, was greatly desirous to preach the Gospel at Rome also, longing to see the saints therein, "that he might impart unto them some spiritual gift." But being much hindered from going to them, and having heard from Aquila and Priscilla, who were driven from Rome in the Claudian persecution, the state of the Christians there, he wrote the Epistle which is addressed to them by name, not only to clear up to them "that they must be justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;" but also to animate them to triumphing endurance throughout their fiery trials, by assuring their hearts, that "if so be that they suffered with Christ, they should be also glorified together."

We have hitherto considered "the Gospel of Christ as the power of God unto salvation," from the effects of the Apostle's *preaching*; we shall henceforward have to consider the same truth as collected from his *writings*. It is an exalting subject we are about to enter on; a subject laden with the fulness of consolation:—*The weight of present suffering lightened by the Gospel!*

THE SUFFERINGS OF THIS PRESENT TIME! Who

is free from them? Who has not felt them? I look around with no gloomy view—I take in at a glance the varied scenes of life's realities as they are, not as any moody imagination would picture them; and what do I behold? What is the *present time* as *you* have found it? and *I* have found it, and *all* must find it? Has it been to us a peaceful voyage on a sunny sea—with no storm, and no cloud, and no rock, and no beating as on troubled waters? Has it been to us a path of flowers, a journey by cooling streams and refreshing shades, unchecked by any hindrance, unentangled by thorn and brier, unwearied by any burden and heat of the day? Has it been to us a long period of undisturbed peace, with no fear, and no foe—with no strife and no contention—with no conflict and no overthrow? I trow not! This the Gospel of Christ no where leads us to expect—this the memorials of experience by no means allow us to conclude! Why do I see the seal of sadness on many a brow—and the furrowing tear on many a cheek, and hear the burdened sob from many a heart? They are the testimonies of *the sufferings of this present time*. Why do I see many a mourner by the scarce-closed grave, refusing to be comforted, harrowing up remembrance by the recalled endearments of days, and scenes and faces

which cannot come again? Each weeping form claims our notice *to the sufferings of this present time*. Why do I behold ingratitude, and the coldness of hearts united, and bosoms rent by another's fickleness, and the rankling wounds of unkindness, and the repinings of disappointment, and hopes which were green upon life's tree, scattered withering in the blast, and whirled, like dead and shrivelled things, upon the winter's gust? Poor spectral embodiments, shadowing forth beliefs and sympathies which once were, they now only represent the *sufferings of this present time*. Why do I witness the erewhile manly frame bent low, and the stout man humbled, and the strong limb palsied, and the poor languishing tenants of the sick-bed, in tossing weariness, sighing through the night for the coming day; and when day is shining, longing for the closing night? They are bearing about in their bodies *the sufferings of this present time*. In a word, why, when I would do good, is evil present with me? Why is there a law in my members warring against the law of my mind? Why is the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh? Wherefore at one season must I ask, "why art thou so disquieted, O my soul," and at another, "has God forgotten to be gracious?" Why at one time are

my sins like a sore burden too heavy for me to bear; and why at another do I sigh "Oh that I had wings like a dove, that I might flee away and be at rest?" To make me long to be delivered *from the sufferings of this present time!* Yes! and for a far more gracious and sanctifying reason are all these varied aspects of present sorrow and human suffering permitted to pass before us. To awaken in us the Apostle's confidence, that all these "are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," if with faith and patience we seek from the God of mercies and the Father of all comfort that "these light afflictions which are but for a moment, may work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Let us, then, proceed to the enquiry, how the Gospel of Christ, in our seasons of suffering, becomes to us the power of God unto salvation, by leading us to the belief and confidence "that all things work together for good to those that love God."

I.—By teaching us the *design* of afflictions. That they are not casualties—not uncertainties to which we are constantly liable, and from which there is no defence—but that they are the believer's discipline—the necessary exercises of a soul which is being made like unto Christ. The training he is

to look for in being made meet for Heaven. The crucible, if we may so speak, where that which is of the earth, earthy, is purged away, that the more unencumbered spirit may hold higher and holier communion with its God. And this, sanctified affliction, by its varied workings, accomplishes. For *it weans us from the world*. St. Paul, speaking of his speedy departure to be with Christ, says:—"I am now ready to be offered." And St. Peter, with like composure, writes:—"I know that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle." In both of the Apostles we see waiting saints, who had long taken a farewell of the world in which they lingered; fully equipped by faith, and longing for the mysterious journey, the last step between them and their home. And I often feel my heart misgive me, when I think—am I as ready and composed—can I with equal calmness say at any moment, "to depart and be with Christ would be far better?" Alas! we are linked to the present with so many ties and associations; we have before us so many plans unfinished; so many objects to which we are attracted; so many connexions which seem to make a little longer life desirable, that we linger, and wish to linger, another year and another year. There may be extatic moments, it is true, when on upward wing we are lost like

the morning lark in Heaven's surrounding glories, and we feel that we could go soaring upward and upward; but, like the same fluttering bird, our nest is on the ground—the home of our natural love is here; and, as in a moment, that home-love stops our higher flight; the wing is in an instant still; the heavenward flutterings are staid—and we drop heavily and quickly down to the lowly scenes where our hearts are. In other words, these home-ties and these earth-ties so hinder us, that we are not like the Apostles, standing at the tent-door, waiting to quit the tabernacle. Nay! perhaps at times we shrink back with many misgivings from the thought. But afflictions one by one unloose these many ties. Parent departs—and child is removed—and kindred and acquaintance put away from us. The hopes of life become less glittering, and the sea of existence towards the evening looks more dark and ruffled. From life's green tree our withered and disappointing expectations one by one drop off. The branches are broken, and the boughs are lopped—and, like the Chaldean's vision of the once spreading tree, there is but “the stump of the roots thereof left in the earth.” But all this is design. It is weaning us from the world; it is making us ready for our own appointed hour; it is unconnecting us

with the present, and attracting us to the world unseen ; till at length, we feel we are lingering *here* but longing to be *there*, and our silent yearnings, nay our expressed desires are :—" Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace !"

Another design of affliction is *to prove us*. Moses, speaking to the Israelites, says :—" Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no." Now Israel's wilderness-wanderings are an exact type of the journeyings and " sufferings of this present time." " We are strangers and sojourners, as were all our fathers ; our days on earth are as a shadow, and there is no abiding." We are passing through the wilderness to a city of habitation ; for " here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Changes without us, and decayings and infirmities within, alike tell us—" this is not our rest." And what the bitter waters, and the stony rock, and the fiery serpents, and the opposing Amalekites were to God's people in the desert—the afflictions and " sufferings of this present time" are still to the Israel of God ! They are to try us and to prove us. The Israelites sung the hymn

of rejoicing when they beheld their enemies overwhelmed in the Red Sea ; but very shortly after when they came to Marah and tasted the brackish waters, they murmured. They could receive the deliverance, but they could not endure the worm-wood stream. Our hearts too much resemble them. We can receive mercies at the hand of God, but we soon repine and murmur under the visitings of correction ! But when the chastening rod is again and again laid upon us, we learn to "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God." Our hearts are less rebellious ; our proud resistance becomes less stubborn ; the winnowing-fan of the Chastener scatters much that is worthless out of our thoughts ; and the trying heat of the Refiner separates much of the secret dross, that our souls may become more meet for heaven's own moulding. A process is going forward ; we trace it not by each day's trials, or in every succeeding visitation ; but as we look back through years, as we compare ourselves now with what we were before we knew the discipline of correction, we marvel at the change, and confess with the Psalmist :— "Before I was afflicted I went astray ; but now have I kept thy word."

A further design of affliction is, that "*God may deal with us as with sons.*" Oh ! blessed correc-

tion, which a Father's hand deals, and Mercy's interceding tempers! But such is the believer's correction. "He endures chastening, and God dealeth with him as a son." I would appeal to the fond parental feelings of your hearts. You are fathers and mothers; you have children dear to you; your love for them is that which parents alone can understand. The thought of their suffering pain most keenly wounds you; you watch them with anxiety—with tenderness, to ward off evil. Yet you feel a parent's responsibility. You see the present linked with, and opening out into, the future. You know that restraint is necessary, and discipline, and it may be, chastening. Yet it goes to your very heart to correct; how gladly, if it would answer the purpose, would you bear the chastening rather than inflict it. But this may not be. You cannot forego it, for a necessity is laid upon you. It is your love, your tenderness, your high sense of duty which constrains you. And why all this love and this determination, and this stringing up of your yielding heart to its duty? You are dealing with your children as with sons! Did you love them less you could suffer them to pass uncorrected! Were you less anxious for their after good, you could forbear. *So God deals with us as with sons.* He

rejoices not in our sufferings, but he sees there is a needs be why we should suffer. He delights not to correct, but rejoices in mercy; but his correction is mercy, for it saves us from gathering wrath. He looks not to the present tear, and the momentary smart, and the transient pang, but he looks to the eternal weight of glory, and for that prepares us. Were we less dear to Him, he would less afflict us; but in sparing us he would not deal with us as with sons:—"For what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"

But affliction has another design—to *make us sympathizing*. That is a most touching appeal of the Apostle:—"Remember them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body." Till we have been chastened ourselves, we cannot fully *sympathize*—that is, *suffer with*—those who are in affliction. But when we ourselves have mourned—when we ourselves have suffered—when we ourselves have bent beneath the Chastener—when we ourselves have known pining sickness—we seem to have a holy fellowship with the suffering. The scenes of their sorrows and afflictions are sacred ground to us; we tread there with reverence; we talk with them as with those who are beneath the hand of God. The balsam tree gives not out its healing balm till it has been

itself wounded ; and so with our hearts, they need to have suffered grief before they can administer to grief. I know not what the feelings of others may be, but I myself look upon a Christian sufferer as one who claims not my sympathy only, but my reverence. He is beneath the hand of God. He is for the moment invested with a more exaltedness of character than his fellow men, in that God is chastening him—trying him—proving him. Heavenly dispensations are at work with him. He is passing through a solemn probation, and he will not come forth from it the same man he went into it. His frame almost wasted of what is earthly, seems to partake more of the spiritual ; the tabernacle is being taken down, and through its loop-holes the soul is looking out upon the steep valley of eternity ; and is catching, through the mist which at first enveloped it, the opening glories of the world to come. His sick chamber, how solemn is it ! the scene of suffering humanity—the scene of a chastening God ! It may be humble, it may be destitute, it may have all the coldness and the nakedness of scarce-housed poverty ; but if God is dealing with him as a son—if the Redeemer of afflicted mortality is there touched with a feeling of his infirmities—if ministering angels are fanning with unseen wings his fevered

head, and gladdening with their spirit-whisperings his sinking soul, how holy is the place! With what awe should I gaze upon it! With what pious fear, and yet with what sacred hope, to see the creature thus near to his Creator, and the Redeemer waiting, as I may reverently believe, for his redeemed!

But the design of affliction is for yet greater ends. *It is to make us partakers of God's holiness.* The ore which is melted and softened, easily takes the impress; and so the heart which is softened by chastening, more readily receives the teaching and image of God. I have known more than one instance of a fellow-sufferer being taken from the midst of the anxious and noisy world, and I have cautiously watched such an one, and when the hand of the Chastener was first upon him he was silent, and full of gloom, and there was an evident reluctance to submit to the correction. But God's spirit has been at work, and a word spoken in season has not been in vain, and we have been able to talk together as men who have felt there was a spiritual fellowship between them; and we have by degrees lost all reserve; and I could trace the gradual workings of God's grace teaching that heart, comforting it, raising it to more heavenly things than those which once

engaged it. And it has been led on step by step, convicted, and humbled, and blessed with a sense of pardon, it has fully understood God's corrections, received them—endured them—rejoiced at them. It has learnt to love and speak of heavenly things, to converse of a believer's hopes, to cast the world behind it, to feel that it was raised above it, and by degrees to become so far a partaker of God's holiness, that its converse was of God and with God, its fellowship was with "the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ;" it has been filled with the hope of glory; and was, as far as human conjecture might presume, restored to God's image, filled with his love, and a partaker of his holiness. And this, not because affliction was simply endured; but because affliction was sanctified. It was turned to a holy use, and wrought out holy results, making the heart on which it worked, to look unto God not only for the *adoption* but also for the *likeness* of sons.

But by far the most important design of affliction is "to make us perfect through sufferings." St. Paul, speaking of the mystery of the Father's dealings with his Son, declares—"It became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through

sufferings." Now the path of the Saviour and his followers is one; and that path is one of *suffering*. This may sound strange to hearts unprepared to receive it—but the New Testament Scriptures are full of it. They teach us, that to ensure the crown, we must endure the cross; and that "if we suffer with Christ, we shall be also glorified together." We cannot fully understand how Christ was perfected through sufferings, nor can we fully comprehend how sufferings are to perfect his followers. But the Evangelist who looked into heaven, and "beheld a great multitude whom no man could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with robes, and palms in their hands," received this testimony from one of the elders:—"these are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." The Redeemer learnt "obedience by the things which He suffered." And in his suffering footsteps, following Him there, and looking to Him there, we learn obedience. Jesus, when He suffered, "committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously." Even

in His soul-trial and soul-torture, in the agony and bloody sweat of Gethsemane, His obedience was *perfect*:—"Father, not my will, but thine be done." And the same filial resignation, the same Son-like submission of himself to God, the chastened Believer learns in his suffering:—"It is the Lord, let Him do as seemeth Him good." "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Suffering is the perfecting process of those who are being made meet for the inheritance of God's people—and the bright hope of that inheritance is what should animate us in our trial-time of suffering. "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory, by Christ Jesus, after ye have *suffered awhile*," prays the Apostle, "make you *perfect*, stablish, strengthen, settle you."

Oh! there is something very exalting as well as sanctifying in the thought that here there is being commenced in the Believer that likeness to Him in whom He believes, which shall be fully perfected hereafter. That, on earth, that transformation is beginning, which in the glorious revealments of heaven will be consummated, when the redeemed shall wear the full likeness of their Redeemer, and "see Him as He is."

II.—A few words should be said on the Gospel of Christ being the power of God unto salvation

to the Christian sufferer, by pointing out to him the *need* as well as the *design* of suffering! St. James writes—"My brethren count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience;" and another Apostle writes—"Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." A field, which in due season is to bring forth sixty-fold, and a hundred-fold, needs not only gentle dews, and refreshing showers, and mild vernal suns; but it must be broken up, and harrowed over, and the cold frost must bind it, and the scorching sun of summer's noon-day must strike upon it. It must undergo the changes of season, and the beating of the weather; and the very diversity of culture must make it fruitful. And so with the heart which is being prepared for "the incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever." The fallow ground must be broken up; the share of sorrow must plough deep into the stiff and hardened soil; "roots of bitterness" which lie far beneath the surface must be exposed. The seed of truth must not only be scattered, but *harrowed in* by frequent discipline and the frequent exercises of trial. The frost of adversity must assail it with its binding grasp; and the hot and

withering sun of many a fiery trial must strike on it its piercing heat. It must undergo seasons of probation, the cloudy day, and the winter sharpness; and, by a process of spiritual culture, must become a "fruitful field which the Lord hath blessed." There is need of suffering to beat down pride, and thwart self-will, and eradicate many a high thought, and burn up many a Jonah-gourd, that we may seek shelter from the rock and not from things which wither in a day. And there is need of suffering, too, to call forth patience, and to exercise us unto godliness, and make us weary of a world where there is no resting-place, till at length we seek that rest which is above, the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

III. The Gospel of Christ becomes the power of God unto salvation, by causing the Christian sufferer to trace within himself the *effects* of suffering. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." Perhaps there is no period in our existence in which we are so perfectly calm, as in some very deep affliction! Then we are still! Humbled before God! Really waiting to see His hand, and know His will! We feel that it is His correction. That the

whole matter is between our souls and Him! There is within us a profound and solemn suspense! a pause from sob and sigh and tear! a period in which thought and sense and passion and feeling are absorbed in some mysterious musing! just that voiceless, breathless listening, in which all nature lies when the last echo of the thunder-peal has died away, and the intense hush succeeds, whose silence is solemnity! And it is then we hear God! We heard Him not in the strong blast which first swept by us. We heard Him not in the heart-quake, when our whole being trembled. We traced Him not in the fire which almost consumed us. But now, when these have passed—in the dread pause which follows them—we hear his “still small voice!” And this abides with us! God has dealt with our souls as He promised to Israel of old:—“I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her—and I will give her the valley of Achor for a door of hope.” We feel a quiet dependance now we never knew before. We look up with a holier confidence, believing that God “cares for us.” We are the subjects no longer of mere mischances, and unavoidable per-adventures; for we know our very trials are measured to us, and that He who measures them

"will not lay upon us more than we are able to bear!" These are the peaceable fruits of correction—the consoling results to those who are exercised thereby—"the work of them is peace," and the effect of them, "quietness and assurance for ever."

Having thus considered the *design*, and the *need*, and the *effects* "of the sufferings of this present time," a future illustration must shew that these are not "worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

But from what has been said, what a heartfelt of comfort may be gathered by the Christian sufferer! The sufferings of this present time end not here, they bear fruit in heaven. They are not merely for the *correcting* us now, but are preparing us for a higher state hereafter. The cloud which gathers around us and settles on the scene of trial, may seem dark and lowering; but through it and beyond it, there is a glory yet to be revealed. The *weight* of that suffering may be severe, and heavy to be borne; but in the other scale there is a weight of glory which far out-balances it! It teaches the humble follower of Christ that his Saviour was a man of sorrows; and that in his sorrowing path, sown as it may be with tears and bitter drops, he is in the foot-prints of that myste-

rious discipline in which God led his own dear Son. Heavy as his Cross may be, the Crown is over it. And dark and narrow as the vale of tears may seem, it swells out into the wide-spreading glories of an eternity of blessedness and brightness. Sorrow's whole artillery may be opened upon him—all God's waves and storms may pass over him—like Job he may be stript of all, and like the firm worshippers of Israel's God, be cast into the fiery furnace of the keenest affliction. But let him only seek that his sorrow may be sanctified; let it only lead him nearer to Him who once suffered *for* him, and now suffers *with* him; let him only look from the dark threatenings of the present time to the glory to be revealed; and though "troubled on every side he is not distressed; perplexed but not in despair; persecuted but not forsaken; cast down but not destroyed." In the midst of the rocking storms he has an anchor sure and steadfast. He sees beyond the darkest cloud a gleam of radiance shining forth. Though stript and destitute, he feels that the same God who gave has taken away, and therefore he blesses His holy name. Like God's servants in the heated furnace, there is seen walking beside him a bright and an upholding form, "the form of the Son of God."

Brethren and sisters in affliction! The suffer-

ings which your Lord sends upon you make the scenes where you are tried and exercised holy ground! Oh! strive not before God's time to depart from it. The discipline by which you are trained, shows the glory for which you are training. On that holy ground where God is talking to you, he has talked with all his Saints and suffering people. On that same holy ground he perfected his own dear Son. Faint not, repine not, murmur not. Remember—"For in that Christ himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." His encouraging voice is near thee. His ready help is not far off. "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." "As thy day so shall thy strength be." Oh! how often have you felt these sweet words realized! You have looked in fear and anticipation, to sorrows to come; you have shrunk back from the very thought in dread; you have felt if such a trial, or such a bereavement should be sent to me—I must sink under it, it would be more than I am able to bear. But no! the trial has come, but he who sent it provided grace beforehand. The day you could not once think of has arrived, and you have had a strength ready to your need. Only remember past deliverances and past measures of grace

and consolation, and you will never shrink again at the scowling blackness of any storm of trouble yet to come; you will find the promise of oft fulfilment:—"As thy day so shall thy strength be." "It is said of Hagar, that when her bottle of water was spent, she sat down and fell a weeping, as if she had been utterly undone. Her provision and her patience, her bottle and her hope, were both out together. Oh! what must she do? What? Why there was at the very place, and that near at hand, comfort enough, a well of water to refresh her." And so it is too commonly with ourselves, we eye the empty bottle, we dwell upon the present loss, we look with rent hearts upon some Ishmael-hope which is withered and faint beside us. But it may be, even then, that Mercy's ministering angel is near at hand, to point us to some sparkling well of revealed comfort; some "well whose waters fail not." Oh! let us only weigh the Present with the To-come—the cross with the crown—the heritage of suffering with the inheritance of glory; and we shall estimate with the Apostle:—"The sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

ILLUSTRATION VIII.

THE GLORY TO BE REVEALED.

"I RECKON THAT THE SUFFERINGS OF THIS PRESENT TIME ARE NOT WORTHY TO BE COMPARED WITH THE GLORY WHICH SHALL BE REVEALED IN US."—Rom. viii. 18.

THE Gospel of Jesus Christ, or, in other words, the Revelation of God, is to the enquiring Believer what the top of Nebo was to the dying Moses. From the hoary summit of that mountain the time-honoured Patriarch beheld all the loveliness and glory of the Promised Land. And so the Believer, from the lofty eminence to which the Gospel raises him, beholds the blissful and promised scenes of which Canaan, with all its richness, was but an imperfect type ; and scans the illumined and glory-tinted realms, far off though they may yet be, where the Redeemed shall dwell with their Redeemer, and the glorified Saints be "for ever with the Lord."

Fellow-heirs of Christ and his glory, ascend with me this exalting height! Behold with me these

transporting scenes! Gaze with me on those unspeakable honours which God "hath prepared for them that love Him." Lo! lo! the earth fades before us! A cloud of brightness shuts it from our sight! The voice of God seems to call us:—"Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter." Oh! may we contemplate them till, lost in astonished delight, *we*, like the Apostle, forget "the sufferings of this present time in that glory yet to be revealed."

How shall I approach this enrapturing theme? With what solemn emotions—with what devout uttering shall I speak of it? The love of burning Seraphs, and the tongue of tuneful Angels are too cold and tame to tell, in fitting phrase, of such heavenly and holy things! Pray with me and for me, that "utterance may be given unto me, that I may make known this mystery of the Gospel."

THE GLORY WHICH SHALL BE REVEALED IN US. This shall be,

I.—*In the great change which shall pass upon us.* The grave's destruction is overthrown for the Believer. "He that believeth in me shall never die." The tomb to him is the gate of life. It is the bed hallowed by his Redeemer's body, where the departed Saint lies down in corruption to be raised in glory. It is the silent and solemn

unrobing room, where he strips off the time-worn vestments of mortality, that he may be "clothed upon with immortality and life." All that is destructible he will there leave behind him, like his fretted grave-clothes in the sepulchre; and when he awakes up it will be after "God's likeness." He will see Christ as he is; and beholding Him will be transformed into His image. Infirmary shall cease; that which was sown in weakness shall be raised in power; "Mortality shall be swallowed up of Life;" and Christ's sainted ones shall pass through the resurrection-gate by which the Breaker-up has gone before them. Henceforth they shall be "equal unto the Angels; neither can they die any more; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." Their bodies which were sown in the grave *natural* bodies, shall be raised *spiritual* bodies; in a moment shall they be changed, in the twinkling of an eye, that they may be fashioned according unto Christ's glorious body; and in these *spiritual bodies* He shall be glorified in them. The semblance of those bodies shall be bright and glistering. "They shall shine as the brightness of the firmament." The glory which the Father has given unto Christ, will He give unto them. They shall be with Him where He is; and behold His glory,

and partake of it! Oh! well might the Apostle be lost in wonder at this thought! Well might he lay emphasis on the greatness of that love which has prepared such honor and blessedness for our exalted humanity. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." 1 John iii. 1, 2.

II.—*This glory shall also be in the resplendent scenes where the saints shall be glorified.* To describe these fitly would be impossible. They will not be *material*, like earth's perishing scenes of beauty. They will be spiritual for spiritual denizens. They will need no borrowed lustre, no light of sun and moon; for they will be beaming with the glory which is from God. It is true that to give us some dim conception of them, they are described as heavenly mansions. The home of the Blessed is called a city with foundations. Its walls are described as jasper. Its gates are precious stones. Those gates are never shut, and angel-guards are watchers there continually. Its streets are of transparent gold, like unto clear glass. Its garniture is all that is dazzling and

of surpassing loveliness. But this glowing description is figurative—because *material*. To give us a further comprehension of this bright scene, the Redeemed are said to be “before the throne of God ;” and “out of this throne proceeds a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, and on either side of this river is the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields its fruit every month, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.” But, though figurative, this portraiture of heaven conveys to us that that shining abode will be exceeding glorious. It will be God’s own dwelling-place. “The Lamb shall be the light thereof.” The Lord shall be seen there face to face. An eternal radiance will be issuing ever from Him, and in His light will the saints see light.” An uncreated splendor will rest over all and upon all ; not like the tarnishing lustre of the sun, but making all more intensively bright, more excessively refulgent. Such ineffable brilliancy no mortal eye could gaze upon—no perishable existence could endure. But the spiritualized bodies of the saints will be made capable of being the recipients of such spiritual radiance ; and by an exalted, elevated, and uncircumscribed intuition—not through the narrowed inlet of injurable sensations—shall the soul behold God and His glory,

and in a consummated fruition be filled with the "fulness of that joy which is at His right hand for evermore."

III.—*This glory shall likewise consist in the blessed company which shall share it.* "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead" shall be "ever with the Lord." "They shall be with *Him* where *He* is." "God will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God." Their fellow-adorers before His throne shall be angels and archangels and thrones and dominions. And their pure brotherhood, those who have washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb, and "the spirits of just men made perfect." Oh! blessed and glorious family of which God shall be the Head, and His sainted creatures be bright spirits resembling Him! Are we curious to see the great ones of the earth, do we desire to look upon princes and illustrious personages here? What are they to the assemblage which shall be beheld in heaven, of Patriarchs and Prophets, Priests and Apostles, Martyrs and Confessors? What are they to that absorbing and ravishing sight when our "eyes shall see the King in his beauty!" and by gazing upon Him we shall be partakers of His bright-

ness? Into that pure world nothing can enter that defileth. None who can disturb—none who can make us afraid. No Tempter—no tyrant—no slanderer—no oppressor. There shall be a oneness of joy pervading all spirits, and a fellowship of praise employing all tongues. If the Apostle's assertion is true of our association *here*, how much deeper in its fulfilment shall it *then* be:—"Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels: to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant." Heb. xii. 22—24.

IV.—*This glory shall be enhanced by the blissful employment of those who inherit it.* They shall look upon God. They shall have a full and transporting sight of Him. They shall behold Christ's glory, the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. This shall be the concentration of the beatific vision, *to look upon God.* With rapt gaze, with entranced wonder, with joy unutterable shall they behold Him, the Light of light, the Source of essential glory which had no beginning and can have no end. God

shall be in the midst of them; and around Him, rank behind rank of shining Intelligences, circle beyond circle of pure and exalted forms shall with unsleeping eyes fix on the irradiations of His brightness their intent and ravished sight. It is true we cannot now conceive what shall be the inexpressible delight of thus gazing upon God, because whatever we look upon here soon wearies. But if we can imagine that in Him is the fulness of all loveliness; from Him proceeds the essence of every beatitude; and that in Him are centered all the effulgence and intensity from whence angels and beaming seraphs, and all the depths and lustrous worlds of the sidereal heavens, as well as the unclouded magnificence of those empyrean scenes which are His immediate throne, receive their sempiternal brilliancy—then we shall dimly understand that in Him there is an attractiveness of glory which shall draw every created thing to look upon Him. That emanations irresistible are for ever circling around Him which engage every eye, and encaptivate every understanding; and that as lesser lights revolve unweariedly around their primary and receive light from it—as rivers run into the ocean and are mingled in its greater depths—that so the undimmed glories of the Creator shall attract the Creature, and the vast depths of his unsullied

brightness shall absorb them, till his glorified Saints become one with Him, and God, the First and the Last, shall mystically be "all in all." John xviii. 21—23.

But the Saints in glory shall not only enjoy a *near sight* of God, but the *full love* of God. The redeemed and glorified Church is said to be the Lamb's Bride, to show the very near and pure love which it shall receive from him. The Lamb is to be the light of those blissful regions where the Saints dwell. In Him they will live, and be filled with His love; and their joy shall be full, and that joy none shall take from them. This vale of tears, this Bochim, or place of weeping, shall then be passed for ever; for there "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." They shall be freed from all the wants and cravings of the present time; for "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto fountains of living waters." Every bodily infirmity, every sinking of the heart, every weariness of the once mortal frame shall be swallowed up of life; and there "no inhabitant

shall say, I am sick." They shall rest from their labours. Rest in God's love, and partake from Him those reserved treasures of his grace, "which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man to conceive." With Him is the fulness of joy, and at His right hand there are pleasures for evermore; and these he shall bestow upon his sainted ones. *Here* God's love is dispensed to us by measure; *there* in its superlative fulness shall we be filled with it—satisfied with it—lost in it. *Now* God is veiled from us, we cannot see him as he is, nor love him as he is; but *then* we shall see him as "altogether lovely;" that love, even the love of God, will draw us to Him; and in it we shall delight. Above all heaven's "delectable things," above all the glory which shall be around them, the wonder which will attract the souls of the Redeemed, and the theme which will demand their song, will be the love of God which *now* "surpasseth knowledge."

The glory of the Saints shall further be heightened by the exceeding exaltation with which they shall be honored. They shall be glorified with Christ. They shall reign with Him. They shall have robes of whiteness, and crowns of gold. Palms shall be in their hands as emblems of victory; and they shall be "kings and priests unto God and

the Father." Oh! we cannot contemplate such exaltedness without adoring wonder; we cannot approach the consideration of it without being entranced at the greatness, the perfectness, the extensiveness of the Redeemer's work. It would have been much had he effected an amnesty between the offended Majesty of Heaven and man the guilty Apostate. It would have been much had he allowed us in some far-off distance from Him to have spent Eternity without the due reward of our transgressions. It would have been much had He given up some ray of His glory—some degree of His blessedness for us. But that He, God's Son—that He, "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person," that He who was from the beginning with God, He who was coëssentially and coëqually God of God, and Light of Light, that He should lay aside His plenitude of blessedness and take on Him the form of a servant, and become a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; that He should be familiar with human suffering, and taste the cup of mortality in all its bitterness; that He should spare not Himself, but become obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, and pay down there in frame-agony and soul-agony, his heart's blood drop by drop, enduring the opponency of Hell, and the ignominy

of Earth, and the desertion of Heaven, for our ransom; and more than this, that He should snatch us from Hell to transplant us to Heaven; that he should deliver us from being Satan's thralls, to be co-heirs with Him of a blissful Eternity; that He should remove from us the curse, and encircle us with the crown; and for the heritage of woe give us the participation of His kingdom! Oh! this, indeed, may well be the burden of the Angels' song! This may well call forth the unrestrained hallelujahs of the Redeemed:—"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood; and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen!"

The eternal blessedness of the Saints will be yet further glorious in "*that they will be in a state of perfection.*" Here our estate is one of constant struggling and anxiety. We must watch and pray. We must strive and resist. We must keep under the body, and bring it into subjection. "We must not count ourselves to have apprehended, but forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, we must keep pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God

in Christ Jesus." Now all this indicates a state of trial—a state of agonism—a state of imperfection. But there the warfare will be accomplished. From the sinful and sinning body we shall be released. No sin will assault—no temptation will approach us—no struggling will be needed. The armor will be laid aside, and the sword be sheathed; the watch will have been kept, and the triumph completed; and, like warriors after a hard-fought field, "we shall rest from our labors." Then, but not till then, shall we be perfect; perfect in holiness; perfect in blessedness; perfect in the full fruition of those promises "which are the substance of things hoped for." In that bright world holiness and bliss and purity will be unvariable; they will suffer no eclipse, no dimness, no occultation; they will be subject to no rising and setting—to no ebbing and flowing; they will be ever at the culminating point—full, perfect, and inextinguishable. The inheritance of the saints is an undefiled inheritance—"an inheritance incorruptible, and that fadeth not away;" and the bright dwellers there shall be, like the scenes which they inherit, undefiled—free from all allurements to sin—complete in righteousness—perfect in holiness—and "filled with all the fulness of God."

A further enhancement of the Saints' glory will be in the lofty degrees of knowledge to which they shall attain. Here we see through a glass darkly ; there we shall see face to face. Here we know in part ; there we shall know as also we are known. Here the corporeal dims the intellectual—the earthly chain fetters the spirit's wing, on which it would soar to heights as yet unscanned, and to depths as yet unmeasured. There is constantly before our enquiring minds and enterprising thoughts—"Thus far and no farther," and our poor bewildered understandings are constantly confessing in their unattainment of the solution of many a mystery—"such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me, I cannot attain unto it." But there the Mind will be exalted and enlarged—unencumbered by its dull tenement, the natural body, it will take its flight through the vastnesses of eternity—unimpeded by besetting hindrances, it will drink wisdom from Him who is its source and its centre. Studies which it once desired to look into, but was not able, will then engage it ; and it will know—not by the slow process of reasoning—not through the imperfect inlet of eye and ear—but, by a far-scanning intuition which will pervade all things. All the mysteries of Creation, it may be, will then be made plain.

All the deep things of Revelation will then be shown to be in perfect harmony. Objects which the soul now cannot measure, but staggers in contemplating, will then be fathomable. We shall understand the love of God. We shall comprehend the exaltedness of His nature. And the hidden things of God will be made manifest, because our conceptions will be amplified to receive them. Oh! how elevating is the thought that our minds shall go on in an endless progression of knowledge, that the veil shall be taken away from before us, and that we shall see no longer through a glass darkly, but contemplate as with an Angel's ken, the "manifold wisdom of God."

Having thus laid down "the sufferings of this present time," and "the glory to be revealed," let us dwell a little on the assertion "that they are not worthy to be compared."

The "present sufferings" are but for *a little time*. The Apostle styles them "Our light afflictions which are *but for a moment*." A few years more and the head will forget its aching, and the heart its anguish! A few years more, and the struggle will be ended, and the suffering be passed! A few years more, and the tear will cease to trickle, and the sigh be no longer heard! The last sickness will be passed—the last pang

will have ended—the fretted garment of the flesh will be put off, and like way-worn travellers we shall have reached the halting-place, and laid our fardels down. But the glory to be revealed is *eternal*. There shall be no date, no limit to its duration, for all measured time shall have ceased. *Here*, if a momentary gleam of happiness burst upon us, it is darkened in an instant with the very fear and anticipation that it shall not long endure. *There*, there shall be the blissful certainty that the happiness is unceasing—that the glory shall never pass away. For *ever and for ever* we may repeat the words, till our minds are lost, and our senses falter; we feel, almost at the first repetition, that our limited calculation is staid; but the bliss of the sainted ones—and their gazing upon God—and their accessions of knowledge, and the fulness of their joy are to be *for ever and for ever*—FOR EVER AND FOR EVER! Oh! measure, with the most transitory thought, “the light afflictions of the moment” with the “eternal glory” which is laid up in heaven, and you will realize the assertion of the Apostle:—“that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed.”

Again, the sufferings of this present time are *light afflictions*. The trial may be grievous—the

burden be heavy to bear—and all around may remind us that we are passing through “the cloudy and dark day.” But, even so, there is a strength proportionate to the trial vouchsafed to us. He who bore our sins and sorrows is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and lays not on us more than we are able to bear. And there is a shelter in the consolations of his God, to which the Believer may betake himself, until the cloud and the storm be overpast. So that his afflictions are either for a *little time*, or they are *light*, or he *has grace and strength to bear them*. But the glory to be revealed is not light, not transitory. It is an *eternal weight* of glory. Our present frames could not endure it, it would be too full—too intense for perishable existences. So exceeding will be its splendour, so overwhelming its degree, that we could neither bear it, nor gaze upon it, neither partake of it, nor approach it. The Apostles were entranced when they beheld their Lord transfigured upon earth; even when the veil of His mortality dimmed the excessive effulgence of His glory. But what will the Saints be in Heaven, when they are before the throne of God? when they have a nearer approach to the uncreated glory of the Ancient of Days? when they behold their exalted Redeemer clothed with light, and majesty,

and honour? when they dwell in the full blaze and concentrated brightness of Heaven's unveiled magnificence? when they themselves shall wear the lovely similitude of their Lord's glorified body? and when an illustrious company of myriads and endless myriads of Seraphs and Angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, shall worship before the intrinsic brightness of Him who is "God of God and Light of Light?" Oh! measure in this view the light affliction with the weight of glory, and you will acknowledge "the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed."

There is yet a stronger light in which we may contemplate the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory which Christ has purchased and prepared for His redeemed.

It will readily be supposed that neither speech nor language can give any adequate idea of what shall be hereafter. Description might be added to description, and glory be enumerated after glory; but the bright picturing would only be one of sense—comparisons with things we see and hear. But all these are necessarily far, far below those unimaginable enhancements of blessedness we shall receive when we see as angels see, and know as angels know. The glimpses of heaven

which open to us in the Apocalypse, show us the bright dwellers there filled with adoring wonder—breaking out into utterings of praise—and with unrestrained rapture gazing for ever on God! And these bright revealings of their adoration convey to us that we must not expect to comprehend, here in this present world, the inward bliss, and the unuttered emphasis of joy which draw forth such wonder, such worship, and such praise. Oh! for a moment look up to those resplendent scenes! gaze upon that blaze of celestial brightness! see, see the Son of God invested with the radiance of glories ineffable! behold those angel-worshippers—those sainted adorers—those white-robed choristers who bend before the throne! They are enrapt with the beatific vision; a simultaneous throb of bliss thrills through each seraphic breast; in ecstasy of lauding homage they tune together their golden harps; ten thousand times ten thousand hands spontaneously sweep across the harmonious strings—one strain of jubilant rhapsody reverberates in sweet diapason from the concordant melodists of heaven's extolling choir; and the untiring song they sing in the fulness of irrepressible praise is: "Alleluja! Blessing and glory, and wisdom and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."

Oh! ye redeemed servants of the Lord, what glory awaits you after the sufferings of this present time! How exalting, how animating a hope have you set before you! Your way may seem dark through this scene of sojourning—your trials may seem more than you can bear. But look often, and with Faith's keen eye, to the glory to be revealed. This the Apostle did—he looked not to the things which are seen, but to the things which are not seen; he looked to the glory breaking behind the gloom—to the Crown succeeding to the Cross. *An eternal and exceeding weight of glory!* Press onward with that beaming before you, and the toilsome way will not stay you, and the things of time will not hold you back; and your path shall be as the shining light shining more and more to the perfect day; for the nearer you approach to that glory the fuller shall it be revealed, and the more ardently will it be desired. Look with faith for Christ's glorious appearing. This was the consummation for which the Apostles longed. This is the fulfilment for which the struggling Church now waits and prays. "Looking for and hasting to the coming of the Lord," you will not dread his appearing, though He should be revealed whilst you are living on the earth; and if you sink down into your rest before

His coming, when you cease in your quiet graves from your labours, it will be with the blessed expectation that all who are in their graves shall yet hear His voice; that you shall see Him when He is revealed from Heaven, and then "be for ever with the Lord." Oh! blessed hope of exaltedness awaiting us! Filled with such fulness of expectation, who would not say with the dying Saint, "Go forth my soul, go forth, what fearest thou?" With such a staff in his right hand, and such a band to bind up his sinking heart, who does not feel the sufferings of this present time, all lost and swallowed up in this holiness—this blessedness—this glory—yet to be revealed!"

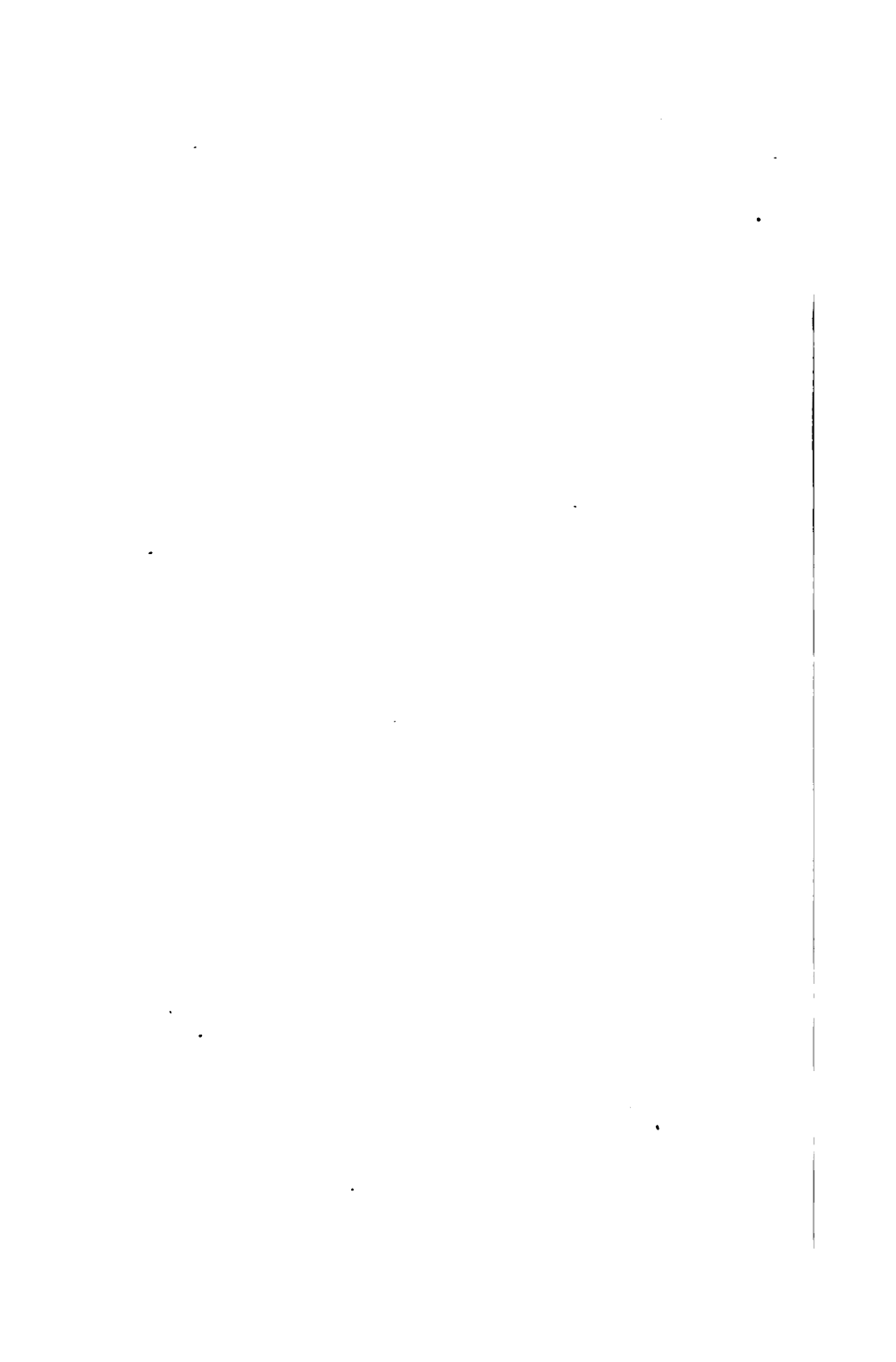


ILLUSTRATION IX.

THEY WHO SEEK ME EARLY SHALL FIND ME.

“FROM A CHILD THOU HAST KNOWN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES,
WHICH ARE ABLE TO MAKE THEE WISE UNTO SALVATION,
THROUGH FAITH, WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS.”—2 Tim.
iii. 15.

IN the former Illustrations of my subject—“The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the power of God unto salvation”—I have considered that Gospel and its power in their *general effects*; it remains that I now set before you three or four Illustrations of its *domestic influence*. And here I would observe, that to estimate the great blessings which our most Holy Faith has bestowed upon us, we must not look merely to many and great nations called by the Christian name, and the overthrow of the old systems of idolatry and darkness, and the higher tone of character, and the holier exercises of true piety, and the general outcalling of many lovely kindnesses and charities which had no scope and no existence before our Lord and Saviour “brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel;” but we must consider, too, the *home*

blessings—the peace, which reigns within that charmed circle where the stricken heart finds its refuge, and the wounded breast is soothed with sympathy; we must look to the quietness, and the confidence, and the repose, which we now inseparably associate and identify with our ideas of domestic happiness; we must *estimate* the interest which our Christian belief has spread around childhood, telling of its artless simplicity “of such is the kingdom of heaven;” we must take into the account the influence of Gospel principles in strengthening the strong link which unites heart to heart and hand to hand, by speaking of Christian husbands and wives as “heirs together of the grace of life;” and we must consider that Gospel’s humanising effects in softening down the asperities of servitude, by exalting Christian servants, shewing that their humblest offices are duties to be performed for the Lord’s sake, which they are to discharge “not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.”

Now it is no uncommon misconception, that the truths and effects of real religion are beyond the attainment of childhood; that there is a grandeur about religion, and a sanctity about godliness, and a depth about piety, to which the young mind

cannot attain. But how fully is this misconception overthrown by adducing that very striking act of our Lord's, when, to rebuke the self-exaltation of his disciples, he took a little child and set it in the midst, and said "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven:" from which we learn that there is something in the very artlessness of childhood, which fits it in an especial manner for the receiving of those truths which "make us wise unto salvation." Let us consider in two or three respects wherein this fitness consists.

I.—*In that the heart of a child is, so to speak, unoccupied.* It is true that it is "born in iniquity," and that its first natural inclinations are to evil; that the smiling innocence which makes its infant face so lovely is not heart-deep; but that there, within, are the seeds, and germs, and traces of sin, which lurk in every descendant of Adam. But by admission into Christ's flock, a child is not only privileged to be called an "inheritor of the kingdom of heaven," but it receives an inward grace and power by which it may be enabled from its first dedication to Christ, to grow up and live as his disciple, and "adorn his doctrine." Its heart, to say the least, is not, as yet, filled with the love

of the world. It is not, as yet, engrossed with those anxieties and cares which harass and encumber it in the active period of manhood. It is not, as yet, given up obstinately to any besetting prejudice. It is not, as yet, tyrannically swayed by any arbitrary passion. It is so far unbiassed that it can more readily listen, than in after years, to God's demand:—"My son, give me thine heart." Prone as it may be to yield to the first temptation, it may be preoccupied with active principles of good before any severe temptation assails it. And we not rarely trace in an amiable Christian child, to whose opening mind a religious mother has imparted the first simple elements of the Gospel of Christ, and over whose peaceful slumbers a pious father has poured forth the deep utterings of earnest prayer, those true and beautiful characteristic graces which foreshadow the more perfect stature of the experienced and tried Christian, and which give the earnest and the hope that that child through years of temptation, and a world of allurement, will be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

II.—The fitness of childhood for the reception of the teaching of the Gospel, consists *in its easiness of belief, and its unsuspecting and ingenuous simplicity*. The world is so full of deceit that we

cannot long mingle in, and be mixed up with, its scenes and transactions, without acquiring a greater or less degree of suspicion and cautiousness. These, alas! become almost necessary for self-defence. We should in many cases be the world's dupes without them. Common prudence teaches us not to believe all we hear, and not to credit all we meet. By intercourse and by years, a feeling of weariness and distrust grows upon us, and much of the boasted knowledge and wisdom of the world is acquired by this cold, calculating discipline, which steals from us insensibly our simple-mindedness, and blunts those finer sensibilities which lay us open to fraud and knavery. Now we carry, I fear, much of this difficulty of belief to the hearing of God's Word. It is this which untunes the ear from hearing, and robs the heart of that unsuspecting meekness by which it can listen with candour, and receive with "readiness of mind," truths which, though beyond the compass of reason, lie within the region and apprehension of Faith. But it is not so with a child. It has not learnt suspicion. It believes all things. It seems incapable of supposing that deceit can practise upon it. With what eagerness and unquestioning it drinks in the wildest romance, and wonders at, but by no means disbelieves, the most extravagant fable. It

does not reason upon what it hears, because the lovely characteristic of its age is to trust all that is told to it. It dwells upon the marvellous, but there is no hesitation of assent; nothing which leads us to suppose that it inwardly rejects aught because it seems to be impossible. And this, strange as it may appear, is the very frame of mind and spirit adapted to heavenly teaching. *Belief* is the first, and main, and indispensable requisite. That *faith* which receives what is declared, simply because God has spoken it. *Reason* is insufficient; had it been enough, there would have been no need of a *Revelation*. But Revelation to Faith is of infinitely greater weight, than reason is to the most enquiring and searching intellect. The high things of which Revelation treats, the truths from God which appeal to our belief, are matters which reason cannot cope with. *It* is finite, *they* are infinite. It deals with things in their effects, but cannot trace them to their causes. It is deep and wonderful, but is soon baffled when it dwells upon things which are eternal and immeasurable. But of eternal and boundless things the Gospel treats. Of God's nature, of God's love, of his purposes from eternity, of his plans which angels round his throne cannot look into, of his covenant of redemption which could only issue from, and be revealed

by, his own omniscient mind. And these subjects, it is clear, we can only comprehend as far as God has declared them. The greatest minds to receive them must come down to a child's capacity; and in wondering but believing meekness embrace them, because they are from God. God's record is Faith's reason! So that the greatest truths of the Gospel the simplest child is just as capable of entertaining as the most subtle philosopher; the one and the other must receive them by faith; they must take them on trust; they must assent to them because God has spoken them; but the child perhaps more implicitly and fully believes, because it never questions:—"how can these things be?"

III.—Childhood is also beautifully adapted to listen to, and learn God's Will, because it is *teachable* and *tractable*, and *dependant*. It is a child's nature to learn. Its first years, from everything that is around it, are acquiring knowledge. Its very curiosity is implanted in it for this reason; and it is perfectly surprising the immense stores of information, adapted to its age, which it treasures up in its opening years. It is not too proud to learn; and it has not attained that self-sufficiency which can make it reluctant to be trained to a higher and better degree of knowledge than that to which it has arrived. It looks up to a superior;

its enquiring disposition proves its willingness to acknowledge its elders wiser than itself; its pliancy of disposition is accustomed to be influenced and directed by parents, tutors, and governors; and this very disposition, carried into higher and holier things, causes it to receive with reverence what it is taught as coming from God, and to be required by Him. Childhood seems to feel its own dependance on those of more matured years. It leans to the stronger than itself, and asks counsel of the wiser than itself. It is readily biassed. A very little persuasion is capable of turning it. It is imitative, it looks for a model, and soon copies it. And all this fits it for training. Only inspire confidence in a child—only exert with kindness and judgment that mastery which a stronger mind will ever obtain over a weaker, and you will so twine your influence with every fibre of its being, that whilst it loves you it will respect, and whilst it fears to offend you, it will shame not to merit your esteem. Now carry out this to a child's acknowledgment of God, carry it out to the reverence with which it hears and speaks of Jesus Christ, who, it has learnt to believe, once died for it; and you will allow that the teachableness, and tractableness, and dependance of its nature, render it not only capable but most fitted to be trained up in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

But, as my aim is to prove that the Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation, let me show how that Gospel furthers Christian parents in their endeavours to bring their children unto God. It *encourages* them. "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." With what a holy tie does this declaration of our Lord bind the parent to the child! What sacred responsibilities does it lay upon us! With what pious awe, with what solemn hope, should it urge us to dedicate them to Christ! Truly there is something peculiarly impressive in the sight of the child of Christian parents being brought unto the common Saviour. This the first act done for it, to promise it to Christ, to bring it to Christ, to baptize it into His name. Oh! with what hope ought such a beginning to encourage us to proceed! How prayerful should we be, how watchful, how anxious, that a course of existence, begun with God's good-will and favour, should run on with His increased and strengthening blessing day by day renewing it, that the weak infant of to-day may become the exalted partaker of the Saints' weight of glory when its earthly course is finished, and its once sinning and sinful nature redeemed from all sin! "*Suffer them to come unto me!*"

Blessed Saviour, is it possible we can restrain them! Is it possible that any indolence of ours—any indifference—any hardness of unbelief, can make us insensible to such an exalting invitation? *Suffer* them to come to thee! Lord, fill us with a fulness of desire—fill us and animate us with the blessedness of our calling, that we may not only *suffer* them to come, but by thy grace teach them to come, show them in ourselves a bright example of following after thee, and show them by our earnestness in their behalf, that we believe “of such is the kingdom of God.”

But the Gospel not only encourages the Christian parent, but *teaches what should be the training of the child*. “Provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” The tender plant needs tender training. In all our dealings with children we should remember that they *are* children. The severe correction, the harsh discipline, may discourage and harden, where the tender expostulation, and the earnest love of parental solicitude would melt into tears. A child’s temper is no common trust; it is one we should deal with in a full sense of its importance. We are to train, not to break; to influence rather than to coerce. Hence the great necessity, the almost vital moment,

of a mother's instruction. She is more considerate, more forbearing, more patient, more capable, by quiet influence, of winning a child's deepest affections. The child's first lessons are from her. From her, when almost an infant, it learns to lisp its prayer. To her it flies for refuge when the sudden outbursts of the father's more uncontrolled impetuosity affright it. And, believe me, it is this quiet home-instruction—this simple teaching which a pious mother imparts to her listening child—this early impression which she makes on its perfectly trusting mind which abides. Long after a father's corrections are forgotten—long after a teacher's admonitions have ceased to sound, long after the severe teaching of experience has power to control, a mother's first lessons remain. They were the first on our minds, and the last they remain there. They were stamped there almost at birth, and they are effaced there only by death. It was not the injunction of Paul, not the sitting at the feet of some Jewish Gamaliel, which led the mind of the youthful Timothy to the Holy Scriptures, but that he knew them from a child; that woman's piety first taught them to him, and that their sacred importance was early made known to him by his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice.

The Gospel yet further aids the Christian parent

inasmuch as it contains "all things that pertain to life and godliness." In the verses immediately following our text, St. Paul declares: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Hence the importance that the Scriptures should be early put into a child's hands. I confess I have no fear, as some have, that a child may be too familiar with its Testament; that it will grow weary of it, and contract a distaste from early reading it, and that so the Bible will eventually cease to impress it. A child's first books are always dear to it. Through the lapse and mist of years we remember the very task-book with somewhat of a solemn reverence; fond thoughts connect themselves with some by-gone lesson we had much difficulty in mastering; and, after many a tossing on life's sea, we look with a degree of respect upon the tale of the marvellous, which drew largely on our childish credulity. And though I have known many who have revered their Bibles from their childhood, I never knew one who from early acquaintance with the Scriptures, had learned to make light of them in his more sobered and matured years. "Wherewithal"

asks the Psalmist, "shall a young man cleanse his way? even by ruling himself after thy Word." And though we may oftentimes take the lower ground, though we may reason with children and with youths of the folly of some course, or the disgrace of particular practices, there is no motive we can urge—no instrument we can ply with such good hope of lasting effect—no reason we can press on them for their forsaking what is evil, and cleaving to what is good—which is so clear, so emphatic, and, I believe, ultimately so successful, as enforcing *their* duty and *ours* on plain Scripture grounds and plain Scripture authority, asserting the Word of God commands you, and if unheeded condemns you.

The Gospel of Christ further aids the Christian parent in leading children unto God, in that it plainly declares *that the whole power is of God*. If we were left to struggle only with our own efforts—if we could only teach, and urge, and sway by example, how often should we sit down discouraged? How often should we exclaim "Who is sufficient for these things?" But if the whole power is of God, if the willing heart is from Him, and the opened understanding, and the power to resist sin, and the preservation through faith unto salvation, then we know where our help

lies. If we can do little to impress, this we can do—intercede with *Him*. We may not be so bold as the mother of Zebedee's children, to ask that those for whom we pray may sit one on Christ's right hand, and one on his left in his kingdom; but this we may ask, that he will reveal Himself to them; that His power and His grace may control them; that they may early know Him the "only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent;" that they may walk worthy of their calling to all well-pleasing; that they may be gathered out of a sinful world; that God will guide their feet into the way of peace, and that finally they may attain the inheritance which He has promised to them that love Him. Oh! be assured of this, you may strive to teach your children, you may be earnest to set them the best and most godly examples, you may be labouring to advance them in the world, to make them good and useful members of society, you may shrink from no advice and warning which you think it your duty to set before them—but, in doing this, you have not done all, *your prayers should be for them*. Herein lies the great hope of your success, and without this you cannot rightly expect that any of your labours for them will prosper. The whole power is of God. He must second your efforts, and He must influ-

ence your children's hearts, or there is no real and lasting work done. "The effectual and fervent prayer availeth much."

Christian parents, let me still dwell upon your *responsibilities* and your *encouragements* to discharge them. You may be anxious about your children's amiability, anxious about their health and comeliness, anxious about their moral and intellectual attainments, anxious about their after success and position in society—but what are all these in comparison with their knowing "their Creator in the days of their youth;" what, when estimated with their Redeemer's blessing leading them and keeping them from that youth up till the winter of grey hairs! As childhood and youth are but the training seasons for manhood, so time is but the discipline and probation-period for eternity. And just as in a temporal sense "the child is the father of the man," so in a spiritual sense is the young Christian the earnest and the promise of the future heir of glory. I know nothing which can so strongly set before you your parental responsibility as this:—*You have once solemnly dedicated your children unto Christ.* Let me affectionately ask, Have you followed up that dedication? What! have they been admitted into Christ's Church? Have vows and promises been

made for them? Were you and their sponsors solemnly charged "to take care that they should be taught as soon as they were able to learn, that they promised to renounce the devil and all his works, to believe in God, and to serve him?" and can you but lightly feel the duty which rests upon you? Believe me, nothing can absolve you from it. No pressure of occupation, no care to provide for them, no plea that you place them under fitting teachers, no hope that they will one day be thoughtful and serious enough to seek and follow what is right. A parent's duty is to talk with a child, to draw out its confidence, to strengthen its belief, to animate it by approval of what is good, to stimulate it by the most watchful example, to lead it into Christian paths, by going before it in those paths; not to *send* it but to go with it to the house of God; not to *charge* it to read its Bible only, but to *hear* that it reads it; and to ascertain, as far as may be, whether the truth of God and the love of God are shed abroad in its heart!

And let us not think that our labour shall be in vain. After all our teaching and training, and after all our watchfulness and prayer, our children may possibly be wayward and graceless; they may cause the sword of anguish to pierce through our hearts, but we shall at least be spared this keenest

pang—that *this is chargeable to our neglect*. Early examples last long. The teaching of our childhood lingers with us more or less to the last. We forget many things, but truths we then learnt cannot easily be erased. We may lay aside the principles of good—we may cover with a veil the best impressions we have received—we may go recklessly counter to what we know to be right, and plunge presumptuously into what we know to be wrong—we may do despite to our better feelings, and bring down by our folly a parent's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave—but, after a long interval of sin and contempt against God, *perchance*, nay, rather *by God's mercy*, we may come to a better mind. Remembrance is then busy at work. The veil is rent aside from conscience. With shame and confusion of face we brood over the long period of an ill-spent life. Recollection carries us still further back. The scenes and thoughts of childhood are once more around us. Happy days! when the morning arose in peace, and the evening went down in innocence! Happy days! when the heart was uncorrupted, and the good name unblemished! Happy days! when no crime of the waking hours disturbed us by night, and no riot of the night cast a shade over the succeeding day. Happy days! when the

world was before us full of hope. How changed from now when we look back through the tears and disappointments and transgressions of years! Happy days! when we were at peace with all around us, at peace with our own hearts, and at peace with God! The contrast overpowers us. In feeling and tenderness we are children once more. Tears of contrite repentance and sorrow burst from us. We fall humbly on our knees. The very lessons of our childhood stand out in all their freshness before our eyes. We seem to hear the dying injunction of pious parents who commended us to Heaven; and we tear ourselves henceforward, by God's help, from the meshes of sin, with the self-expostulation—"What fruit have we of those things whereof we are now ashamed!"

Solemnly I would ask, what heritage can we leave to our children which is in any degree to be compared with Christian example, Christian principles, Christian impressions? The noble ancestry we should wish them to emulate and imitate, is that of "pious parents passed into the skies." Doubtless we should be anxious for their coming years, but what station can we hope for them which can in any way approach the greatness of their being heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ?

I know that we should provide for them, but what provision is that which follows them only to the grave, and then leaves them without treasures for eternity? I know we should labour for their after peace and comfort and happiness, but how can all these be attained unless by labouring to implant in them that pious dependance upon God, and that faith in the promises of Christ, which may enable them through all the changes and uncertainties of the world to realize "that as their day is, so shall their strength be?"

Christian Parents, our responsibility, then, is weighty, our encouragement is great, our path of duty is plain, our task is most holy:—"To bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" to teach each one *from a child* to "know the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make them wise unto salvation." Look upon your children as once pledged and promised to Christ. Look upon them as called by, and baptized into his name. Look upon them as having all the capabilities of being taught for the kingdom of Heaven! Look upon them as bringing with them their Redeemer's solemn charge to you, "Suffer them to come unto me." Look upon them as being, through the Holy Covenant, "Members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the

kingdom of Heaven." And then the interest with which they are invested as your offspring, will be inconceivably increased; you will behold them not only with fondness and tenderness, but with pious hope, and most exalted faith; and whilst you love them as your children, you will behold them in a far higher relationship with reference to the future world, where they and you shall be members of that family of which "God is not ashamed to be called the Father;" that family which embraces in its communion angels and archangels and the "general assembly and church of the first-born, which is written in heaven."

ILLUSTRATION X.

THE BELIEVING HUSBAND AND BELIEVING WIFE.

“WHAT KNOWEST THOU, O WIFE, WHETHER THOU SHALT SAVE THY HUSBAND? OR HOW KNOWEST THOU, O MAN, WHETHER THOU SHALT SAVE THY WIFE?”—1 Cor. vii. 16.

It is a beautiful and distinguishing mark of Christ's religion, that whilst it teaches us how to walk so as to please God, it regards also our relative duties to each other, and urges upon us, as fellow-partakers of the same promises, “to please every one his neighbour, for his good to edification.” The precepts which it lays down for us, and the mutual good offices which it enjoins, are so many concordant links of a golden chain drawing us up to God, and yet binding us, as his children, in sweet fellowship together. “The end of the commandment is *love* out of a pure heart”—shed abroad in us by God, and reflecting itself from one towards another.

Our present Illustration of the Gospel's *domestic influence*, will be by shewing that it strengthens the strong link which unites heart to heart, and

hand to hand, inasmuch as it addresses husbands and wives "as heirs together of the grace of life;" and then considering them in this higher relationship, points out that sincere love, that gentle forbearance, those countless offices of mutual sympathy, which should exist between them. This, I trust, will be fully seen if we consider the Christian view of God's own and holy institution of Marriage; ordained whilst man was yet in innocence; and now almost the only memorial left to him of what God gave to him in Eden.

I.—*It is a bond of love.* A bond so sacred, so allowed, and so witnessed of God, that it is not lawful that those so holily joined together should be put asunder. A bond of love so absorbing in its perfectness—so attractive in its influence, that other ties, even the strongest, beside this are to lose their power to withhold us:—"for this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh." What oneness of heart—what similarity of sentiment—what devotedness of self—what commingling of interests—what strength of endearment—what nearness, what sacredness of soul-union and communion do these words suppose and convey! No covenant can be more binding than that which thus unites us till death

parts us. No compact so sacred as that which is of God's ordinance. No relationship so engaging and so lovely as that which by affectionate inducement lays a holy stress upon us of "bearing each other's burdens." With every noble and with every Christian heart it is pure, undissembling love which draws it to the possessor of its affections—and that same pure and undissembling love will lead it to soothe and to cherish the fond being of whose affections it is possessed. I do not scruple in this holy Sanctuary of God thus to speak. I do not hesitate here to make mention of hallowed love. Of our once innocent nature this is almost the only vestige left to us. But what is it which identifies this love with the institution of God? What is it which makes the expression and exhibition of it amiable and sacred? The acknowledgment and ratification of it by that solemn compact which the Church celebrates, and which God approves and seconds by His blessing.

II.—*Christian marriage exalts woman to her true rank.* Under other systems, sometimes the slave, and at others the pastime of man, woman has been sunk into degradation—imprisoned in the solitary chambers of a tyrannous jealousy, and deemed incapable of aught that was elevating—nay, even of immortality itself. But the ordinance of God,

as revealed to us in His own Word, raises her at once to her true estate as—God's gift to man. Beautifully has it been observed:—"When Adam made that fond excuse for his folly in eating the forbidden fruit, he said, 'The woman thou gavest to be *with* me, she gave me;' he says not, 'The woman that thou gavest *to* me;' no such thing; she is none of his goods, none of his possessions, not to be reckoned amongst his servants; God did not give her to him so; but 'The woman thou gavest to be *with* me,' that is, to be my partner, the companion of my joys and sorrows."¹ And we see through the teaching of the Apostle, her true rank as a Christian wife more elevated still—as being the sharer, not only of man's estate and condition here, but of his heavenly inheritance as Redeemed of God, partaking with him of the same common Redemption, and being an "heir together with him of the grace of life." Yet it is to that blessed and emancipating Gospel, which calls both bond and free, male and female, to the glorious liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, that we owe this important social revolution. The Gospel has made woman the sharer and the soother of man's lot—the partaker alike of his counsels and his cares—the bright beam let into his home of

¹ Jeremy Taylor.

solitude—the sweetener of his wilderness wanderings—the softener of his austere and rugged nature—aye, and oftentimes his guide and encourager in pressing forward after those “who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

III.—*The Gospel speaks of marriage as symbolizing the mystical union between Christ and his Church.* What can more forcibly express its sacredness and disunion! The Apostle tells us “Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. ‘He that loveth his wife, loveth himself: for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church.” Christ’s love for His Church, oh! how *deep* it was! Many waters could not quench it, neither could the floods drown it. How *strong* it was! it bound Him to the Cross, and broke not, though the whole weight of the sins of the world was pressing on it! How *pure* and *disinterested* it was! “Christ pleased not himself;” He gave not Himself for us “for any works of righteousness which we had done, but according to his mercy he saved us!” How *forbearing* it was! it reviled not,

it murmured not, it accused not, "when the ploughers ploughed upon his back and made long furrows," when the taunt would bring him down from the Cross, by blasphemously alleging—"Himself He cannot save!" no! nor even in his dying agonies when he prayed for his very murderers—"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." And such in character, though far, far from such in degree and in intensity, is the hallowed Christian love of wedded life. It is *deep*! All the floods of adversity may sweep over it, but it remains when the flood has passed. It is *strong*! The decaying foot of Time cannot break through it, nor the withering hand of age efface it. It is *disinterested*! Its readiest offering is self-sacrifice. It is *forbearing*! for it is but a more emphatic exercise of that charity—"which suffereth long and is kind, which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

Such being the Scripture view of holy marriage, let us proceed to consider *the mutual help which husband and wife may be to each other with regard to the comforts of the life which now is, and the hope of that which is to come*. It was man's merciful Creator who pronounced—"It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him." And if his solitude was not good in Eden,

if, in its bright scenes, he needed a help as well as a participator, how is the case with him now the earth is cursed for his sake, and that he must eat of it in sorrow all the days of his life? How many cares are there, how many sorrows, how many bitternesses which we cannot bear alone, but which become light when there is one to whom we can impart them, and who will cheerfully bear them with us! This we trace in life's lesser trials—those little vexing annoyances which, though small and unseen as the nettle's poisonous sting, like it serve long to smart and rankle. Left to ourselves we brood over them. What at first was not worth a thought, we make the cause of a troubled day and a sleepless night. It may be some slight wish frustrated, as Ahab's for Naboth's vineyard; or some little indignity to our natural pride, as Haman's because Mordecai would not stand up before him; or some passing disappointment, like Jonah's because his gourd was withered. But one who knows our peculiar dispositions, who sorrows with our sorrow, who allures from us the cause of our heaviness of brow and moodiness of heart, reasons with us; pours the anodyne of sympathy into our minds; sets our supposed troubles and perplexities and jealousies in a new light; bids us reflect, perhaps, how little those things which

now wound us we shall even heed when a year has passed; nay more, awakens us to true Christian fortitude, by showing us that we are not to expect to tread this wilderness without a thorn, nor to drink of Life's cup without its drops of worm-wood.

And if we need such a counsellor, and one to sympathize with us in our lesser cares, how much more do we need one to enter into our bitterness in life's real and great troubles and encounters. When the whole strain and stress of sorrow is upon us, we feel oftentimes supernaturally supported to bear it. We neither swerve from it, nor sink under it. There is a strength and an energy and a grace for the time and the trial, and through these we endure. But in the silent and hushed pause which follows the storm, when the excitement has passed, when we realize what has seemed a dream, oh! how lonely, how disconsolate, how desolate is the heart! How it seems to melt and sink within us—we experience a dreariness, a nothingness of spirit which we cannot unfold—a grief, perchance, which finds no expression or alleviation in sob, or sigh, or tear. Death has crossed our threshold for the first time. For some little period we cannot think it real. We go through the sad ceremony of mourning and interment—we are sensible that

there is an unwonted gloominess hanging over us, which the dark pall and open grave occasion. But we cannot think it real! It is a hideous dream. We keep struggling to throw it off, to wake from it. But the solitary hours follow, and we see again and again the vacant place—death's shadow dimly lingers on the wall—and we realize the certainty that one is taken from us. And now let one who shares our loss, weep with us tear for tear, but breathe consolation in our sorrow; let us only feel that we do not stand alone; that the storm which is sweeping over us finds us hand in hand and heart to heart, and we seem nerved to bear. We feel that though one is taken that still one is left. And sweet as any angel's harp, are the tones of sympathy which steal away our tears, and sink like balm into our wounded spirits, bidding us not to sorrow as those who are without hope, and assuring us that there are breasts which feel like ours, and sympathies in sad harmony with all our sighs and grief.

Sorrows our heavenly Father sends upon us "because he dealeth with us as with sons." They are preparative for a state of higher and holier things. Without them we should know but a part of what God *has* done and *is* doing for us. At the brightest noon the stars are in the heavens,

but from the sun's absorbing lustre we see them not. The daylight sinks beneath the West—the darkness thickens, and then their bright peaceful light appears. So the whole expanse of God's Providence is full of stars—the very brightest blessings—but as long as the Sun of Prosperity is at its zenith, we see them not, we know them not; yet when the darkness thickens, when the chill of evening is stealing on, then those stars shine out upon us, and with a degree of quiet melancholy we gaze upon them, and feel their influence as we gaze. We soon learn that life is no easy path, no flower-scattered way. Experience teaches us to look for many a stone of stumbling in it, for many a briar and bramble. But be it as it may, bright or cloudy—steep and up-hill, or easy and declining—by fond companionship it is gladdened and enlightened. We learn that by a mutual participation of each other's sorrows the burden is divided—that by holding together we can better bear the shock and brave the assault, and that by the very disclosure of some long-pent-up grief we are relieved of a moiety of its pain. It is not joy which makes us dearest to each other, but sorrow. We love far better, far holier, when the same chastening hand has brought us to the place of weeping together, than in the fullest enthusiasm

of our first affection. In the latter case there was an exciting restlessness ; but in the former there is the hallowing, softening, hushing intensity of the feeling, that we have known the same inward sufferings—and, by a mysterious anguish, are now more than ever one with each other.

And if such mutual sympathy and reciprocated encouragement, like an endearing fellowship, strengthen us to bear life's allotted ills one with another, who shall say how much they further us, if with a holy resolution we set out together on the narrow way which leads to life. As husbands and wives, then we may expect a blessing, when not singly, but conjointly, we strive to resist temptation. When we join hand in hand and heart with heart together that we and our house may serve the Lord. When we consider ourselves as bound even by a holier covenant than that of the visible Church, by the invisible bond of the Christian Covenant, "being heirs together of the grace of life."

Oh! how emulously should we strive to further each other in holiness. How frequent, how earnest should be our prayers for each other, that Eternity may not sever the fond alliances of Time! With what interest should we ponder the Apostle's words:—"What knowest thou, O wife,

whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" Heirs together of the grace of Life! Heaven our common aim—its bright regions our common hope—treading in the same paths which lead to it; exhorting and encouraging one another daily; raising each other when we faint and droop; morning by morning, and evening by evening sending up to God's throne of grace our mutual prayers for each other's strengthening and perseverance; going up together to God's ordinances; together drinking-in the deep consolations of His Word; together growing in grace, and increasing in godliness—this, this is Christian marriage! This is love of soul and soul, as well as of heart and heart. This is entering into a covenant of most sacred communion, which shall last when death has disannulled the marriage-bond, and the grave has separated in body what God once joined together. This tie is never broken, though by the world its links are unseen—it is a *soul*-bond and a *spirit*-tie as deathless as the soul is deathless, and indestructible as the spirit is indestructible!

The New Testament Scriptures furnish us with the most beautiful instance of the mutual help of a believing husband and a believing wife, in the characters of Aquila and his wife Priscilla. Amidst

the idolatries of Rome they knew the God of their fathers. Their fellowship too was among those who knew him. They were no temporizing hypocrites—God's people to-day, when all was peaceful; and Cæsar's tomorrow, when the brand of persecution was raised. They preferred exile, to denial of their faith; and to be driven from Rome, rather than from the ordinances of their God. But they had believed together, and they must go forth together, for Claudius had commanded all Jews (and at this time the Christians too were classed under this name) to depart from Rome. Who shall tell how the one strengthened the other! How the one called the other to the exercise of sustaining faith, and deep, devoted piety! Aquila, firm in his belief, takes cheerfully the spoiling of his goods for Christ's sake; and Priscilla, we may suppose, equally firm, accompanies him with holy cheerfulness:—"Where thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried." At Corinth we find them fellow-helpers of Paul—working with him, at one time, at his craft as a sailmaker; and, at another, at his holier work of establishing the Church of Christ. Wherever else we read of them, it is with commendation. Withersoever they went

they carried their faith with them, and God's altar with them. From Corinth they accompanied Paul to Philippi—there they had a Church in their house. When they returned to Rome again, after the persecution, it was the same. Their house was a little Church, where prayer was daily made and God was continually worshipped. Oh! blessed union, when the fond heart is thus bound closer to heart by the mystical alliance of the communion of saints! Blessed fellowship of soul and soul which continues through all the travels and tempests of this present world, only to be lost in the more perfect consummation of the Saints' communion in Heaven.

We may make this subject one of practical use, by gathering from it the duty of Christian husbands towards their wives, and wives towards their husbands. I shall not here speak of that true and strong love which is the first and necessary beginning of all wedded happiness and peace; but consider those other kind and forbearing acts which administer to love, and serve by daily exercise to strengthen its influence. St. Peter exhorts us:—"Husbands dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife." Where there is sincere love there must be true esteem; and a Christian wife, if she be the soother of our

sorrows and a partaker with us “of the grace of life,” demands not our care merely—nor our occasional protection—nor our momentary exhibitions of attentiveness and affection—but our reverence and honor. These she is capable of appreciating; and, if rightly valued, will take every occasion to deserve. If the Christian wife owes her husband the reverence of submission, he equally owes to her the reverence which amiableness and pleasing devotedness tenderly demand. The elements of a gracious and godly woman’s mind are susceptible of any elevation. You cannot instance a degree of true greatness, or of most hallowed piety, to which they do not fit her to attain; and if we add to this capability of greatness, that control over our hearts which is the consequence of her loveliness, we cannot fail to esteem her—whether as Christian wife, or Christian mother—worthy of our fullest honor, as well as of our fondest love.

Another duty we should practise towards them is—*considerate kindness*. For her husband, an affectionate and godly wife foregoes all—the home of her childhood—the associations of her youth—the close and daily intercourse of a mother, from whom she has never been before parted—friends and kindred—and spots dear to remembrance—from all these she is separated by her trust and

endearment to *one*. For him she oftentimes spends hours of loneliness, hours of anxiety. His cares become doubly hers, for she sorrows for him as for herself. Keenly sensitive of every change of look or expression, a cold word wounds her, and the most seeming indifference makes her after-solitude a time of tears. This very devotedness of hers, deserves it no return? This sensitiveness, demands it no consideration? Oh! they make the strongest claims upon our best and noblest affections, to pay back to her that kindness which it is the very impulse of her nature to perform.

A further injunction of the Apostle is—"Husbands love your wives, and be not bitter against them." A harsh sentence is uttered in a moment, but we know not how deep it may strike, and how sorely it may wound. "How great a fire a little matter kindles." We begin, it may be, with a word; a harsh word lingers and fosters distrust—distrust is succeeded by a growing coldness—then peace is broken—the society of each other is disrelished—the home becomes unattractive—the harmony of former love destroyed—and then how many an hour of bitterness! How many heart-burnings! How many mutual recriminations! How many a widening breach! And all this occasioned by the first harsh word. Hence, probably, there are few

truths more important to remember for our domestic peace, than that "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."

Amongst the duties of Christian wives, the Apostle Peter instances, as almost embracing in it every other, *gentle submission*:—"Ye wives be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear." And to a similar end St. Paul writes:—"As the Church is subject unto Christ so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." Woman, from her very nature, seeks protection—seeks one in whom she may repose trust—one to whom she can resort for counsel. By honoring her husband she honors herself; and, by her gentle obedience unobservedly and influentially obtains the strongest though most pleasing control. Her very gentleness and submission are her strength. These, with every good and generous man, disarm wrath, and awaken that deep and lasting interest which waywardness and self-sufficiency never could obtain.

Cheerfulness is also a necessary quality of a Christian woman's mind. Tossed in the exciting turmoil of a troubled world, man has much to harass and disturb him. His every-day encounters

are of a nature to make him, alas! too careful, too anxious! If he is a Christian husband and a Christian father, his great anxiety is for those who look to him as their earthly stay and dependance. The day's disappointments, it may be, vex him; he has received coldness and indifference where he expected cordiality and kindness; he has been exposed to the world's contumely; and, amid all this, possibly he has sustained, in his worldly transactions, material loss, and he returns home from the busy mart and din of men, heavy and care-worn; like a stricken bird bearing the shaft with him, he hastens to the refuge—to the quiet of his family. What can calm his mind, what can soothe down his excited feelings, like that tender cheerfulness of a truly pious and Christian wife, whom in real difficulties he finds to possess far stronger heroism than he possesses, and whose pleasing contentedness, whilst it encourages him to hope that to-morrow may be brighter than to-day, also animates him to the godly belief—"As thy day so shall thy strength be."

A wife's necessary influence is also greatly strengthened by *observing the peculiar temper of her husband*. We have all of us not only besetting sins, but besetting dispositions. These it should be our unceasing prayer and watchfulness that the

grace of God may rectify and control. But there are times when hastiness will break out from a meek Moses; and a John, forgetting his kindly-affection, be ready to call down fire from heaven. Against these outbursts a wise woman will watch. She will not provoke, where provocation has already done too much. But as the feeble reed bends to the angry blast which sweeps harmlessly over it, whilst it brings down the stubborn oak—so she will wait till the impetuosity of temper is allayed, and by her quiet forbearance “throw oil upon those troubled waters,” which an ill-timed word of interference would only chafe and vex to expressions of greater bitterness and sin.

But, probably, a believing wife in no way gains so true and effectual an influence over her husband as by *unostentatious, trustful piety*. That genuine *practised piety*, which a Christian wife and mother breathes throughout her home, is the true bond of peace, the best alleviator of sorrow, the holiest as well as loveliest example she can exhibit, whether to her husband, to her children, or to her household. Many a husband who obeys not the word, is won, at length, by the meek and Christian deportment of his wife. He sees in her that Religion is a reality—that its peace is inward and abiding. That when the world in which *he* trusts fails to

comfort him, the secret influence of unpretending godliness, causes his wife to rise superior to passing troubles, and triumphant over many calamities where he would sink powerless and in despair. Their common child, it may be, is lost; the father has no hope, while the mother's rises to the most lovely exercise of heavenly resignation. And he is won by the piety of his wife. The amiableness and exaltedness of her Christian character has saved her husband; and they henceforth together tread that heavenward road, whose "ways are ways of pleasantness and all whose paths are peace."

I cannot leave this subject without adverting to that unspeakable fulness of hope which connects itself with all the home-interests of a believing husband and a believing wife. While they who know not God look to every change of time, or fortune, or sickness, with distrust and dread; and toil on through years in perplexing uncertainty of what "evil days" may be advancing—the believing husband and believing wife trust all to God. They know by observant experience, "that except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it;" and even when the darkest cloud is over them, and some friendly prophet-voice enquires at their hearts, "Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy household?" in the fulness of a

trusting and God-seeing resignation, they can breathe—"It is well!" With them there is no distressing cares about possible changes—"the Lord is their Shepherd and will lead them to cool pastures." They look forward, it may be, to the lapse of years, when, with feeble steps, they may go down together toward the silent valley—but there is no fear, God's promise goes with them, and smooths and brightens the way before them:—"Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made and I will bear; even I will carry and deliver you." Time limits not their hopes, the present existence is not the end of their happiness—"they are heirs together of the grace of life." The grave may for a while divide them—the one may be taken and the other left; there may be separation, sad and lonely to the surviving one, it is true; but the sorrow which hangs the house and heart in mourning is not a "sorrow without hope"—it pierces beyond this present time—it is lost in the frequent gleams, which break upon us, of "the glory to be revealed;" and the good grace of God, which makes every sorrow bearable, at length enables us to speak with calm and tearless composure of those who sleep:—"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for *they* rest from their labours;" and we

turn from the jealous mound and stone which hide them from us, animated with increased and holy eagerness to follow in the path which leads to the undisturbed peace of the blessed dead ; and beseeching with our fervent prayers, that "He who is the Resurrection and the Life, may shortly accomplish the number of His elect, and hasten His kingdom, that we, with all those who are departed in the true faith of His holy Name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in His eternal and everlasting kingdom."¹

¹ Office for the Burial of the Dead.

ILLUSTRATION XI.

THE CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

"THE CHURCH THAT IS IN THEIR HOUSE."—Rom. xvi. 5.

THE morning's prime! How fresh and life-full is the hour—buoyant and up-buoying—scattering its coolness and elastic joyousness around the outgoings of the young day. The morning's prime! Nature's sweet orchestra is atune betimes. From the wood and brake, from the valley and upland-slope, amid the spangled leaves, and in the light of the clear sky—we hear the gushing, grateful, love-inspired music of ten thousand quiristers. The lordly sun "coming as a bridegroom out of his chamber," his beams of glittering but ungarish light—the liquid ether, cool and clear, not yet bedimmed with the hazy sultriness of the summer's noon—the blended incense up-issuing as the breathings of a silent ecstasy and adoration to God, from the vestal sisterhood of flowers—the inexpressible exhalation of sweetness, which, like a pure atmosphere of the dayspring, floats around—the soft

breeze, bland but invigorating—the mountain-tops, unhooded from their mist-mantles, soaring into the keen skies—the diamonded hedge-rows—the crystal dew bending the wet grass—the placid lake, which all night long had been the mirror of the soft stars, now quivering and dancing beneath the winnowing wing of the matin breeze—all these stealing into our spirits and into our being, lift up our souls to God, and seem to whisper calmly, but irresistibly—"It is the hour of praise and prayer!" Happy thought! that while universal Nature is at her orisons without—from many a public sanctuary, from many a family altar, from many a secret closet, the voice of prayer ascends to Heaven! Is it the smile of God, approving this universal adoration of things animate and inanimate which makes the morn so lovely, and its influence so hallowed?

Connected with this hour of prayer, will be our present theme. The *domestic influence* of the Gospel shedding through Christian households blessedness and peace, from the sacred duty to which it calls them of Family Devotion.

In the tenth Illustration of this series, I instanced to you the characters of Aquila and Priscilla, as "The believing husband and believing wife;" our text now calls our attention to them as an example for

home religion. In St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians we find him sending to that Church a salutation from Aquila and Priscilla, "with the Church that was in their house." This Epistle to the Corinthians was written from Philippi, at which place we learn that these two pious persons kept up Family Devotion. Yet again, in our text, when St. Paul writes from Corinth to Rome, he sends salutations to the same Aquila and Priscilla, and likewise "to the Church which was in their house" *there*, at Rome. From whence we gather, that so consistent was their piety, that go wherever they did, this piety went with them. That whether they were exiles for the Truth, as they were at Philippi; or whether, in a rest from persecution, they returned to Rome—the removal of their home could not remove the presence and practice of Religion from that home. Like Abraham, wherever they pitched their tent, there they built an altar. And, whether wandering or rest awaited them, this seems to have been their unchanged resolve—"As for us, and our house, we will serve the Lord."

In calling your most heedful attention to the Christian duty of Family Worship, we will first review the *reasons* for it; and secondly its *benefits*.

I.—As *families* we are dependant on God's providence and mercy, and therefore as *families*

we are bound to make acknowledgments. Irrespective of the love of God which watches over us as individuals, there is a further love which unites us in families, and makes our interests common interests. Some of us can look back, probably, and say with the Psalmist:—"We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us what thou hast done in their time of old." From hereditary hearsay we can declare that for three and four generations the God of mercy has always visited our families with love—that he has fixed his name there—that the dew of his blessing has been on them from generation to generation—that he has held them together not only as families, but as Christian families, that he has partitioned them out and kept them as a seed to serve to him. And if our families, as families, have long been dependant on his goodness, and his preservation, and his love, I ask you, descendants of a heaven-blest ancestry, what should be our hereditary gratitude, and heir-loom piety, as families? How should we labour that that blessing which has been so long upon us should be continued to us! How earnestly should we seek that the same reverential holiness and religious influence, which has been as a Palladium in the homes of our forefathers, or rather as the sacred Ark of the Covenant resting there,

should remain with us and our children after us! How cheerfully, with joint acknowledgments, should we go before God each day of our lives, declaring that it is He who hath set His hedge about us—that it is He who hath made our households “households of faith”—that it is He who hath bestowed upon us the greatest of ancestral privileges, that

“Of pious parents passed into the skies.”

II.—A further reason for Family Prayer, is, that we should make family *confessions* of our sins before God, those sins whose guilt has been contracted in our family capacity! The Scriptures tell us of the “iniquity of a house,” as Eli’s; they tell of iniquity visited on the children to four generations; they tell of sins that bring wrath upon families; and a “curse that enters into the house to consume it with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof.” And why is it that a curse is thus entailed generation after generation? Why is it that so often the iniquitous father is followed in the path of crime by his iniquitous son? Why is it that so black a cloud seems to rest upon so many a household? It is because those families have sinned together, and never prayed together. It is because many a crime has been committed in their collective capacity, and yet never been confessed

by them collectively. It is because father and son, mother and daughter, concurring in deceit and extortion, in quarrels and excesses, and by strengthening one another's hands in impiety and profaneness, have filled up the measure of family guilt, and have sought by no prayer nor penitence to empty it.

But even in religious families which are not branded with scandalous sins, there is need every day of solemn acts and expressions of Repentance before God for sins of daily infirmity! Their vain words, their unprofitable converse, their defects in their relative duties, their occasional disagreements, their instances, it may be, of provoking one another to wrath instead of "provoking one another to love and good works"—all these imperfections have need to be confessed, and bewailed by the family together. The best families, and those in which piety and love are strongest, in many things come short, and do enough every-day for matter of confession in the evening.

III.—There is need of family *thanksgiving*. While other families are in want—yours may be in abundance, or in sufficiency. While sorrow or sickness are spreading through the household of your neighbour—yours may be at peace and in health. While the train of mourning is slowly

winding from another's door, every tie to you may be spared unbroken. While the children of others may be wayward and an anguish—yours may be dutiful and a blessing! And if these are daily blessings, oh! what cause is there for daily thanksgiving! Nor let us forget, that it is God who bestows on us, not only these favors, but every family endearment also. It is He who has planted in our homes, conjugal and filial affection. It is He who has knit together parent and child, brother and sister, in one bond of unity. It is He that makes all our domestic cares *one*, all our family successes *one*, all our home-enjoyments *one*! It is He that has spread our table, and made our cup run over. And shall not the God of our family mercies be the God of our family praises? And more especially if we are truly *Christian* families—if we are together living by Faith in Christ—if we can trace Christian principles, and Christ's example spreading through our homes—if a concern for the truth as it is in Jesus—if a desire to walk as He walked—if a more earnest looking for peace and pardon through His blood, influence our households—if the grace of God abiding within them manifests itself in its fruits and its effects—oh! brethren, enriched with such undeniable blessings, what should be our thanksgivings, what

should be our united thanksgivings, that not only mercy and truth, but that Christ and his salvation have come to our house?

IV.—Another reason for Family Prayer, is, that there is need of petitions for grace and mercy! Daily bread is received by families collectively, and we are taught not only to pray for it day by day, but to pray for it *together*: “Give *us* this day *our* daily bread.” All the employments and affairs of the family are matter of joint concern, and therefore should be matter of joint petitions. The family cares concern all in common, and therefore all should lay them before God together. Family comforts affect all alike, and therefore should be sought by all. Family crosses press alike on all, consequently all should seek their sanctification and removal. Again, there are certain temptations more particularly incident to certain families. *Busy families* are in temptation to worldliness, and neglect of Religion, and against these they should pray together. *Needy families* are in temptation of distrust and repining, and against these they should pray together. *Affluent families* are in danger of pride and gaiety, and against these they should pray together. And so, according to its peculiar circumstances, every family will have urgent need not only to watch, but also to pray

together, that they enter not into temptations. Nay, there is yet a greater blessing, which, as God-seeking families, you have to seek in earnest petitioning—*the grace of Godliness*. You have cause for earnest entreaty, that your children may be children of God—that your servants may be servants of Christ—and that you may be a family which the eye of the Lord God may rest upon. And to this end nothing will be more conducive than that you not only pray for your families, but pray *with* your families. Let them hear you pray to the Lord to second the good instructions and counsels you give them—and God, with whom effectual, fervent prayer availeth much, will hear your supplications, and grant them grace to make their practices correspondent with your prayers.

V.—But there is a stronger reason still for Family Prayer, and that is, the need of family intercession! It may not be to *one* only, but to *many* families that we stand related. To some by kindred, to some by acquaintance, to some by Christian sympathy, and to all the families of earth by brotherhood in Christ. Of these families thus related to us, some may be in sorrow, some in danger, some in temptation, some in distress. Oh! where is our concern? where is our affection? where is our relationship? where is our faith? if we commend them not in

prayer to the grace of God; nor seek for them comfort in their sorrow, protection in their danger, strength in their temptation, and a way to escape in their distresses? Or, to put this case in a yet more powerful view. Some near and dear to us may be living without Christ and without hope in the world, they may be wandering in the ways of sin—lost to consciousness—lost to society—lost to themselves—lost to God. Disgrace and ruin may be before them—misery and Hell. And, men and brethren, where is our love? where is our compassion? if we kneel not together at the altar of our homes, and pray God to bring back the wanderer, to carry conviction home to his heart—to turn him from the ways of guilt and sin, to God and holiness; and to change his bitter portion of remorse and despair into penitence and peace? Oh! how can we better advantage the prodigal who has left his home, and his God—than by making mention of him daily in our family intercessions? Prayer can reach far—and though it cannot of itself change the heart of man; it may bring down the influence and grace of God to reclaim the guilty, and melt the impenitent.

Having thus reviewed some of the *reasons* for Family Worship, let us, in the next place, consider some of its *benefits* and *advantages*.

First—God will rest where there is a house that serves him, and will fill it with his presence and with his blessing. When He confirmed his purpose of blessing Abraham, he gave this testimony that he observed the pious character of the Patriarch: “I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.” When the ark of God was without any certain resting-place, we find the God of Israel blessing the house of Obed-Edom for that ark’s sake, because it abode there. To Joshua we find the same Covenant-keeping God declaring, “There shall no man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life; as I was with Moses so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee nor forsake thee.” And why this encouragement but for Joshua’s piety? Why, but for his holy purpose, “as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.” And so it still is, “they who honor God He honors;” “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him;” that is—not only a secret and deep and hidden knowledge of Him, but the secret and continued presence of God is ever with them. It is this that keeps them from “the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and from the destruction that wasteth at noonday.” It is this that strengthens them in all their changes and vicissitudes. It is this that sheds that peace

and blessedness around them, which we look for in vain in the house of the wicked. It is this that blesses them in all their goings out and comings in. It is this that sets the hedge of protection round them, and bids angels watch by them whilst they sleep. Christian Brethren, is this *your* protection? Oh! if you would have the peace of God in your houses, invite it there by prayer. If you would have the influence of Christ to rest upon you, seek that influence by making your households Sanctuaries where Christ may be daily worshipped. And rest assured that God will come to you in a way of mercy, if you go to Him in a way of duty. Endeavour that your families may be praying families; and then, but not till then, will the secret of the Lord be among you.

The next advantage is, that Family Worship will serve beyond all other things to increase the domestic happiness of a family. What can more strengthen the love of a child for its parent, or of a parent for its child, than the daily habit of offering up joint prayers for each other's comfort, health, prosperity, pardon, holiness, and salvation? What can send forth the different members to their daily occupations with more cheerfulness, than the remembrance that the day was begun with prayer, and that God's favour and

protection had been petitioned through the continuance of it? What can spread more contentedness around those who remain at home, than the consciousness that God's presence is resting with them, and that the evening shall unite in love those whom the day hath separated? The family prayer has a family influence. It serves for the promoting of every Christian grace and virtue; and through it, as a means, Religion, if it be at all there professed, becomes more decided, sincere, spiritual, and efficacious. Its influence reaches to the confirming of every relative duty. The members of the family become better members—more affectionate husbands and wives—more diligent fathers and mothers—more dutiful sons and daughters; more conscientious masters and servants. Family Religion is a bond of holy family union—a daily memorial and renewal of that expressed affection which all the members of it should feel for each other; a means of cementing them together by spiritual and eternal interests; a constant recalling to their remembrance, that as they have here a home and a country one with another, so they have to seek together another home and “another country; that is, a heavenly.” Family Religion serves to restrain and smother the first symptoms of much which, if unchecked, would break out into serious

discontent; and to call forth many of the amiabilities which make home so dear. For only let it be once practised solemnly and habitually in a house, and every dissatisfied humour is changed into content; every sound of quarrel or dissension is hushed; every little feeling of jealousy and resentment is forgotten; and every heart is moved with the sweetest impulses of kindness, disinterestedness, and love.

The next advantage of Family Religion is—it will be a good legacy and best inheritance to be left to your children after you! Every feeling of your nature prompts you to lay up in store for them a good foundation; and you cannot do this better than by keeping up Religion in your houses. A family altar, with God's blessing abiding there, will be the surest inheritance you can give. For this, in many a dark day, and many a sorrowful day, your children will rise up and call you blessed; and it may be hoped they will be praising God for you on earth, when you have ceased to do with earth and its besetting cares. Through this means, too, the love of God may be planted in your children's hearts before evil passions desolate them—before idle allurements tempt them—and before the frequent vices and immoralities of the world have blunted them. And even though after

all your pious care and watching—after all your teaching and exhortations—after many a prayer earnestly and deeply uttered, and many a tear bitterly and silently shed—even though after all these, some child of your love should break through all restraint, disappoint your every hope, bring sorrow on *you*, and disgrace on *himself*, and hasten with mad recklessness through every scene of dissolution, intemperance and crime, yet even on *him* you may hope your example of piety has not been lost, that the prayer often uttered has not been lost, that the family intercession has not been lost! Oh! hope, trust, believe that in some lucid interval—in some short pause between crime and crime—in some moment when consciousness and reason strike home upon him, he will recall the peace which once reigned around him, he will remember the quiet which Religion shed on his home—and awakened from folly, and subdued by penitence, he will seek pardon of his God in the deep utterings of prayer—the very prayer, it may be, he once heard at the domestic altar, and from your lips.

But further—the private prayer of families is a blessing to the religious community! A family habituated in this manner, goes from the church in the house to the church of the community, with

the sense that the very atmosphere around God's Sanctuary is holy. They approach there with reverence. The Sabbath which collects them is holy indeed, and honorable! Its exercises are refreshing—nay, such as their souls have longed for! The impression which they carry with them, is that there they shall draw nearer to God, and taste more fully and deeply the inward joy which springs from communion with Him! And, believe me, such an example has a strong influence on a congregation at large. It shames unconcern; it gives a silent reproof to the wandering eye; it gives its testimony against the unmoving lip, and the unbending knee; and convinces the most hardened, that there is a solemnity, a feeling, a powerful efficacy in fervent prayer.

But even further than this—the private religion of families is a blessing to the nation. God spares the Land for the few's sake. For their sake the cloud of wrath passes over. Thanks be to God it is this which has so long preserved our nation! For why, when every country of Europe was almost rent with intestine war, was there peace in our English home? Why, when distress and desolation covered many nations, did this rest under the shield of Heaven? Oh! it was not that there was no spirit of disaffection at work! It was not that daring Infidelity called

not for the wrath of Heaven ! It was not that the immorality of our towns had not filled up the measure of iniquity—but it was for the righteous of the nation—it was for their sakes—it was for the pious intercession of our praying families, that God spared us in the midst of our undeservings.

In urging the application of this subject, I may address myself briefly to three classes of persons:—First—To those who live in the habitual neglect of Family Worship. To you I would solemnly appeal. Reflect, are there no petitions which as a family you need ask ? Are there no adversities or changes to which you are liable as a family, from which you need seek to be defended ? When your household betakes itself to rest, what dangers may assault it ? In the still dark night, what terrors are there at which the prayerless heart may feel alarm, and at which the family which calls down no protection to defend it may tremble ! Oh ! how can you separate one from the other—how can you betake yourselves to sleep which so closely resembles death—how can you part with the uncertainty whether all may meet again—and yet not commend yourselves and each other to God in social worship ! You may say you pray in secret, but those prayers in secret may be dull, cold, lukewarm, without that earnestness which you feel when your children,

your family, and all that is dear, is around you! You may say you teach your children to pray; but your children need example to pray—they need to learn from your own lips, from your own practice; they need to see that prayer is as important to the father as to the child; they need to see that what you teach them you perform yourself. Oh! then, brethren, if any of you have never yet had a Church in your house—if all the years you have lived as a family you have never once joined in one common prayer to God—never once together sought the throne of the Redeemer, begin this year! Offer up your common confession of neglect for the past, and make your earnest and common petition for amendment for the time which is to come.

Next—we would address a word to those once in the practice of Family Worship, but who have now discontinued it. Oh! Sirs, there is a cloud over the family when the altar of God is broken down and neglected, and when the daily sacrifice ceases. And be assured God has kept an account how many days it has ceased. Remember He visits your house as heretofore. He may not come with a blessing, but he comes with reproof. He comes day after day seeking fruit and finds none. You are, it may be said, so eager in your worldly pursuits, that you have neither hearts nor time for

religious exercises. You began at first occasionally, then frequently, to omit the service, and a small matter served for an excuse to put it by; and so, by degrees, the embers on the broken and neglected altar died away. Ah! reflect! enquire for a moment, how this pious duty was laid aside. Was it not because your love to God cooled, and the love of the world prevailed? Have you not found a manifest decay in spiritual enjoyments since you left this good work? Have not indifference, and deadness, and even sin, got ground in your hearts and in your houses by it? And though when you dropped your family worship, you promised yourselves you would make it up in secret worship, yet, look closely, have you not grown cold in that also? Have you not become in all worship less fervent, and less frequent? Is there not a manifest falling away in spiritual things? An evident decline of Faith? A painful diminution of spiritual joy? A traceable evidence that you are not at peace with God? Oh! I pray you, seek what it is which has come into your house, to drive God from it. Break down the idol, whether it be love of self—love of pleasure—love of the world—or, whatever it be, which has ensnared you. Repair the altar of the Lord which is overthrown, and begin again the daily sacrifice and oblation! Light the lamps

again, and burn the incense ; and once more call God back to the house, where he has been so long disregarded.

Thirdly—a word may be said to those who still observe Family Worship. Holy Brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, see that your practices be in unison with your prayers. See that you are uniform and consistent in your religion, that it may appear you are sincere in it. Show that you believe in the reality of Godliness, by acting always under the commanding power and influence of it. Be not Christians on your knees, and not Christians in your engagements. While you seem followers of Christ in your devotions, prove not yourselves followers of the world by your inconsistencies. Having begun the day in the acknowledged fear of God, be in that fear all the day through. Let the example you set your families be good throughout, and by that example teach them not only to read and pray—for that is but the preliminary and preparation to the great work we have to do—but to be meek and humble, to be full of faith and good works, to be just and honest, to be mild and charitable, to be long-suffering and kind, to be affable and easy to be intreated—in fine, “to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God.” So will you adorn the doctrine

of God your Saviour. Set the Lord alway before you. Make all your family interests and family changes the subject of prayer to Him. Pray that the Lord may so order all events, that they may serve to draw forth your gratitude, and cause you to believe that every smallest incident that befalls you is allowed and over-ruled by Him. "He is the God of all the families of the earth;" and "of Him the whole family in Heaven is named."

What do we recommend then? That there should not be one family professing itself to be Christian, which is not in the daily exercise of reading the Word of God. That each night and each morning when the family come together, that parents and children, masters and servants, should all kneel as one household of faith, and that *family devotion* should both begin and close the day. With regard to *family reading*, we would suggest that if the nature of your occupation make it impracticable in the morning, you should, at least, in the evening read to your families—or, if they are of sufficient age, that they read verse by verse with you, some portion of the Scriptures, and that you read some short exposition of a chapter, if such books are in your power. And with regard to the very important duty of *catechizing* and *family instruction*, we would humbly suggest that

there are few ways in which the afternoon of the Sabbath can be more profitably spent, than in parents teaching their children, and mistresses their servants, those plain and simple truths which are found in the Catechism, and formularies, and services of the Church. I know there is some difficulty in breaking through old customs. I know there is a degree of diffidence in commencing undertakings however good. I know that various obstacles may present themselves to many of you, suggesting that such things are not in your case practicable. I know that some will not even have the moral resolution to begin, because it looks too religious, as some will call it. Yet, Brethren, are you Christians? Do you wish your children to be Christians? Do you wish your family to be Christians? Then you must institute Christian practices! Your Christianity must go with you from Church to your homes! The fire of devotion must not be allowed to grow cold in the long interval between Sabbath and Sabbath, but must night and morning be fanned by Family Worship! The Word of God must not be neglected on your shelves, but must be in your hands and in your hearts! Remember that that Word of God is ordained to be "a light unto your feet and a lantern unto your paths;" that it is your comfort against

the day of sorrow—that it is your shield against the day of evil—that it is your armor against the assaults of temptation—your hope against the day of death. It is the rule of your life—the measure of your actions, the condemnation or approval of your thoughts and deeds. Oh! then, Brethren, prize, beyond all price, the Volume of Salvation. Let it not be a mere Sabbath companion—but a daily companion. Begin this year with a Church in your house. Let each master be, what he really should be—the priest of his household—the priest to pray with them, and to teach them. So shall God's blessing rest upon your families—so shall your children grow up in the practice of piety—so shall you yourselves increase in grace and in all knowledge; and so, when your families shall be forgotten as families upon earth, they shall be united in the consummations of eternity with the blessed family which shall be near God in Heaven.

ILLUSTRATION XII.

THE FUGITIVE SLAVE MADE AN OBEDIENT SERVANT TO CHRIST.

"PERHAPS HE THEREFORE DEPARTED FOR A SEASON, THAT THOU SHOULDEST RECEIVE HIM FOR EVER; NOT NOW AS A SERVANT, BUT ABOVE A SERVANT, A BROTHER BELOVED, SPECIALLY TO ME, BUT HOW MUCH MORE UNTO THEE, BOTH IN THE FLESH, AND IN THE LORD."—Philemon 15, 16.

"MAN looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." In our estimation of each other, we consider rank and position and influence in the world; but the great consideration with Him who searcheth man's heart, is (what we too little take into the account) that Immortal principle of our being—that undying spark of heavenly fire which God Himself breathed into man—that he might become a living *soul*. This *soul of man*—this life unseen, which thinks and prompts within us—this portion of the Eternal One—this link to the Divinity—this immaterial and solemn and mysterious essence—this, this it is which gives man his value in God's sight—this it is which has placed his rank next to celestial Intelligences—making him "a little lower than the

angels;" and this it is which clears up to us why Christ's love was so amazing that He should give *His* soul unto death. He knew what a costly, what a momentous, what an eternal thing was that soul of man which came from God, and which, fitted for an Eternity of consciousness, must return again to Him.

It is with this vast consideration before us—the *soul's value*, that we would approach our present subject. To put it in its full weight before you, we must ask you to look at man not in his *temporal* but his *eternal* rank. Then shall we in some measure be able to estimate the Gospel's *domestic influence*, and its humanizing effects in softening down the asperities of servitude, by exalting Christian Servants, shewing that however humble their condition among men, through the one same Redemption-Covenant as the loftiest potentates of the earth, they may become "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ."

My earnest endeavour on this occasion will be to show the responsibility which attaches to us as masters and mistresses, with reference to those who are connected with us as dependants; and to this end I will, first, lay before you what is known or may be conjectured of the slave Onesimus, who, though a fugitive, was not unworthy the interest

and intercedings of an Apostle. And, secondly, the duty which St. Paul's example strongly lays upon us, to interest ourselves, not only for the present, but the eternal well-being of those who are joined with us as servants.

Philemon, to whom the Epistle which bears that name was directed, appears to have been a person of some considerable importance at Colossé, and a fellow-helper with the Saints to the Church there. Onesimus was his slave, and had for some reason left his master. A solicitation that Philemon would again receive him, and treat him as a Christian brother, is the substance of the Epistle.

It is interesting to ask how St. Paul, himself a prisoner, became acquainted with the fugitive Onesimus. How the Apostle, guarded at Rome, should be in any way connected with a slave who had left his master at Colossé. It would seem that when the Apostle was at Colossé, Philemon received him into his house; listened to him as an Apostle of Christ; and through his instrumentality was converted to the Christian faith. Whilst a guest with Philemon, it is probable that, according to his wont, Paul preached to him and to his household, and that Onesimus heard him. We would fain dwell upon this scene, which we may well suppose. Here is a Christian convert. The

Truth has made him free, and he delights to hear it. Yet he is desirous not only that he himself may receive it, but he wishes each one in his house to hear those tidings which have brought joy to him. Paul is his guest. No idler, but instant in season and out of season. One who seems fully to have felt such a love for all men, that he desired that all might come to the truth. Philemon's household is assembled to hear the Apostle. He preaches to them Jesus. Through His name he declares forgiveness of sins. He forgets all earthly rank, and all human distinction, as he addresses them on that great theme—Christ's love which embraces all. He declares that in Him there is no distinction of bond and free. And who shall tell how the oppressed spirit of some poor slave may here have bounded up into consciousness? Who shall tell how some who had known only the yoke of servitude, may have become, through the Apostle's plain speaking, conscious of the heavier yoke of sin? Who shall tell how deeply, how solemnly, St. Paul's words may have sunk into the listening soul of Onesimus—till at length they urged him to seek for that "liberty wherewith Christ makes us free?"

Onesimus is a fugitive. He has fled from his master's home. His master may have been exact-

ing and blameable, or the slave may have been indolent and disobedient. We know not for what cause—he fled. He may have had his master’s brand upon him. He may have been urged in fear to betake himself as far as possible from his scene of bondage. He may have suffered much, and without home or friend may have felt how lone and deserted is man’s lot, when no one careth for him. Like the prodigal, after some days’ wanderings, and some nights’ watchings, he may have come to himself. He may have sat down and reflected. He may have wept over bitter remembrances. He may have been half persuaded to return. But fear kept him back. And thrown on his own thoughts, he may have recollected that he once heard of One who came “to preach deliverance to captives.” The scene where the Apostle preached breaks in upon his troubled mind. That which he heard whispers of hope to him. Oh! could he hear again from that Apostle’s lips. Did he not tell of rest for the weary and heavy-laden? Did he not speak of a world where bondage should be no more? Did he not proclaim of one pardoning Lord, “rich unto all that call upon Him?” Yes! he remembers the Gospel whose glad sounds he listened to in his master’s house. Now, now in his loneliness and uncer-

tainty, it seems to breathe to him of peace; and he cannot rest until he has found the Apostle, and heard again from his lips of that Universal Redeemer with whom there is "neither bond nor free."

Instigated, we may suppose, with this feeling, Onesimus seeks Paul. He finds him, though not a prisoner in bonds, nevertheless, as he styles himself in this Epistle, a "prisoner of Jesus Christ." The slave may not have deceived the Apostle. He may have told him all. He may have laid before him a long catalogue of wrongs and deceits committed against his master. He may have set his conduct in the very worst light. But the Apostle turns not from him with a deaf ear. He does not listen to him with indifference and unconcern. He does not discourage him with harshness and fault-finding and revilings. But we may judge he reasoned with him. Probably he talked to him "of righteousness and judgment to come." Spoke to him of a Master in Heaven. A Judge from whom we cannot flee; and a Lord whose presence we cannot escape. Till the poor slave was humbled; and, in his contrite sorrow, asked—"What must I do?" The Gospel has reached him. Its power is at work. Its light breaks in upon his soul. Liberty—not the shadowy, seeming liberty

of a fugitive—but, the true liberty of a son of God, flashes upon his mind. He feels now there is a more galling chain than an earthly despot's—the chain of sin. He feels now there is a bondage more crushing than that of the most oppressive taskmaster—the bondage of corruption. He is awakened to the consciousness that he is sore bound with the fetters of Satan, and that he has been spiritually drudging for a master whose service is sin, and whose service-money is death. And he cannot rest till from this thralldom he is free. He listens to the Apostle, and through Him becomes a partaker of the glorious liberty of the sons of God—being “begotten by the Apostle in his bonds.”

Behold now this erewhile renegade and slave. No longer a fugitive, but an obedient servant to Christ. No longer wishing to defraud his lawful master of his services, but ready to return, and repair his wrong. No longer fleeing from him in trembling, but drawing near to him with a letter of reconciliation. No longer a servant—a slave—but, through the intercedings of the Apostle, a brother in Christ to his former lord. Now his service becomes perfect freedom, for it is willing service. Now the irksomeness of his task, or of his labour, is forgotten, for it is done cheerfully, as

unto the Lord, and not unto man. He learns in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content; and restored and reconciled, submits in ready obedience to his master's will.

Oh! the emancipating power of the Gospel! It frees the oppressor from his spirit of tyranny, and the oppressed from the yoke of his bondage. It cries aloud to masters—"Give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." And it cries aloud to servants—"Obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God." It brings down the high looks of the proud, and bids him consider the meanest slave, who is reconciled to God, as a brother in Christ Jesus; while it exalts the humble and meek, by lifting him from his low estate to be a partaker with his master in the riches of redeeming love, and in the fellowship of the Saints. It holds out to all the same enfranchisement from condemnation and sin. The same freedom from the yoke of corruption. The same power over Satan to escape his temptations, and burst his bonds asunder.

Such being the Gospel's design and influence—to place all men, as *spiritual beings*, on the same level in the sight of God; and in the same capacity

for Redemption through Christ; we will, in the second place, deduce from this consideration, and from the Apostle's example, our duty as masters and mistresses to interest ourselves, not only for the *present*, but also, for the *eternal* well-being of those who as servants are connected with us.

1st. It is our duty to put them in the way of hearing the "words of life." This Philemon appears to have done with his household; for there is little doubt that as a slave in Philemon's family Onesimus first heard Paul. Faithful servants, from their very fidelity and affection, become as one of our family. They are interested in our welfare, and we should feel a correspondent anxiety for theirs. We ordinarily take pains enough to ascertain, before we are connected with them, that they are honest, and of good report, and trustworthy. But how great is our inconsistency, if, having received them as such, we do not feel the strong and conscientious necessity of striving to further them in every Christian grace and virtue. They may, or they may not, feel inclined to attend the means of grace. But, however this be, our duty is to provide and arrange that they *can*, and to take care that they punctually *do*. "The Sabbath was made for man;" for man's rest and man's furtherance in holiness. It is a Sabbath—a

rest—for all conditions of men. A day when the hireling should be free from his labour, and the very beast have a cessation from its toil. To the Christian it is a day of holy expectations. And who shall say how strongly the heart of many a Christian servant, in common with her pious master and mistress, longs for that day of Gospel blessing and glad tidings.

No excuse, no ties of engagement, no plea of self-duty, can absolve us from the responsibility of seeing that our servants, as well as our children, “be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Nay! a solemn urgency and necessity is laid upon us. And if we, through our neglect, or selfishness, or indifference, shrink from under it, we know not to how great an extent the souls of those who perish in ignorance, through our disregard for their spiritual advancement, shall be required at our hands. Great God! all souls are thine, and alike precious in thy sight! equally capable of eternal weal or woe, whether hidden beneath the simplest garb or neath the ermine robe! Oh! as such, Christian Brethren, regard your domestics! As God’s creatures, as souls accountable to Him, as souls endued with everlasting capabilities for Heaven or Hell.

And here let me call to my aid, as strengthening

me by its testimony, the powerful pleading, on this point, of a recent writer. Having spoken strongly, as I would do, of a master's or a mistress's responsibilities, he adds:—"This may seem to some of you, fellow-Christians, overdrawn and constrained. The language of excitement and prejudice. You would not think so had you been God's minister for more than twenty years, and had you knelt by the sick and dying beds of as many servants as I have done. I have fresh before me, and I trust that I shall never forget, the death-bed of one woman of middle age. She was dying in utter ignorance of God, in utter ignorance of His blessed Son Jesus Christ. She had no hope, no ground of hope, and she desired none—her refuge was her ignorance. When pressed with the holiness and justice of God, with the purity of heaven and its inmates, with the guilt of a rejected Saviour, and a forfeited atonement, she carried all to the charge of *her mistress* . . . She had never been to church. She said she was not allowed to go. It is quite enough that she had never been. The dying sinner felt and acknowledged where alone lay the responsibility. She clutched, as it were, her mistress with the strong arm of her dying despair, and sought to throw her as a shield between herself and the judgment of God. In vain! Whatever

the guilt of the tempter, the temptation had been yielded to. Had there been the desire to know God, God would have provided the means. Had there been the real desire to know God in his own house, no earthly wages would have kept her from him. She died and left no hope behind."

2nd. As masters and mistresses we should look upon our domestics as fellow brethren and fellow sisters in the Lord ; and, as such, be most anxiously desirous that they may enjoy to the full extent with ourselves, not only the means of grace, but the hope of glory. Do not mistake me. I am no visionary. I have no wild thoughts ; and will speak no enthusiastic rhapsody about universal equality. In one sense there never will be equality on earth. God's economy, in the arrangement of his creatures as dependant one on another, is against it. There is nothing hard, nothing grievous to be borne, in wholesome subjection. We have all superiors, and as Christian people we cheerfully allow their superiority, nay, the necessity of it. Servants are not slaves. There is nothing degrading in their position, if it be honestly filled. Their service is a duty, not a drudgery, which they are to discharge as unto the Lord. I do not therefore speak of present equality. It never has been, it never will be, it never can

be, here. But as Christians, as bending with us before the throne of grace, whether in family devotion, or in the public ordinances of the Church, there our servants kneel with us on the same platform before God. The One Lord *our* Father and *their* Father. The One Saviour *our* Redeemer and *their* Redeemer. The One Spirit *our* Comforter and *their* Comforter. The one Heaven *our* longed-for home and *their* home. Oh! how lovely is this view of Christianity! Bringing a whole household together. Linking in the same heavenly and eternal interests the highest and the lowest. Closely uniting them, not only by relative duties, as employers and employed, but as having the same hopes in sorrow, and the same prospects after death. Surely that Lord, "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," looks down with especial favor on that pious household, where the master, in the fear of God, strives that every member of his house shall serve the Lord; and where the mistress is actuated with the feeling in reference to her handmaidens—"She that leads a godly life she shall be my servant;" and where the strong desire and the expressed language of the servant to her mistress is—"I will live with thee, for God is with thee!" Happy Patriarchal days! Would that some glimpse of them were ever

before our eyes! When the master felt that his most sacred interests were one with his servants, and the servants that their deepest interests were one with their masters!

3rd. As masters and mistresses we should "give unto our servants that which is just and equal; knowing that we also have a Master in Heaven." Do we not tremble when we feel, indeed, that God is angry with us? Do we not acknowledge that if he were extreme to mark what *we* do amiss, we could not stand in his sight? Let us then learn consideration and forbearance. Instead of angry words, let us use gentle remonstrance. Instead of threatenings, let us try what words of kindness will effect. Instead of making a servant's condition hard and grievous, and dealing out to her a mere pittance with scanty hand, let us show that we can be kind and generous. That we would give what is just and equal. That as they strive in our service so we would strive for their comfort. Let us endeavour to make them attached to us, and faithful to us, by sympathizing in their troubles—by directing them with our advice—by awakening in them, by God's blessing, a desire to seek God with us, and to adorn their Saviour's doctrine in all things. Uniform kindness and conciliation will do much. Before these, many a stubborn nature is broken,

and many a morose disposition corrected. And in this way you exert, in fact, a more powerful influence and control, than by severity and the most urgent and harsh-dealing overbearance you can ever effect. *We* have a Master in heaven! Let us do to others, as we would should be done to us. And if we need forgiveness, let us show forgiveness. If we need forbearance, let us show forbearance. If we need encouragement, let us show encouragement. And inasmuch as we find that "in many things we offend all," and that "when we have done all we are unprofitable servants," let us not expect that those who have less advantages than ourselves can be perfect in all things, nor that with all their care and watchfulness they can in every season be unblameable in our sight.

4th. It is our duty, as masters and mistresses, to take an interest in our servants' spiritual advancement. Onesimus was a slave. When he appeared before the Apostle at Rome, he was a deserter, with nothing to recommend him, dejected and way-worn. He could have no means of gaining the Apostle's good-wishes, save that he was in misery and without hope in the world. Yet the Apostle took the liveliest concern in teaching him. He saw beneath his squalid exterior, a soul capable of the most glorious destinies, and needing to be

cleansed by the Redeemer's blood. It was nothing to him that Onesimus was a slave; all that he heeded was that he was in Satan's bondage. Nor could the Apostle rest till he was made free by the power of grace and truth, and till he who was a guilty renegade became an obedient servant to Christ. At this time Paul had many illustrious hearers and converts. Erastus the chamberlain of the city, and many of Cæsar's household, heard him gladly. But Onesimus was quite as precious in his sight. *His* soul's salvation was as near to the Apostle as *theirs*. He instructs him. Prays with him. Beseeches him. And does not cease in his good work till he has begotten him to newness of life in Christ Jesus. And similar should be our concern. It is not enough that our servants are allowed to attend the means of grace. They need encouragement. They should see that we are concerned for them. There are times and seasons when we should warn them and reason with them. Our aim should be that *their* Bibles as well as *ours* should be open morning and evening. That their knees as well as ours should be constantly bowed before the throne of grace. That they, as well as we, should attend the Table of the Lord. In fine, that they should bear the evidences of decided piety—true godliness—faith~~y~~ unfeigned—and all

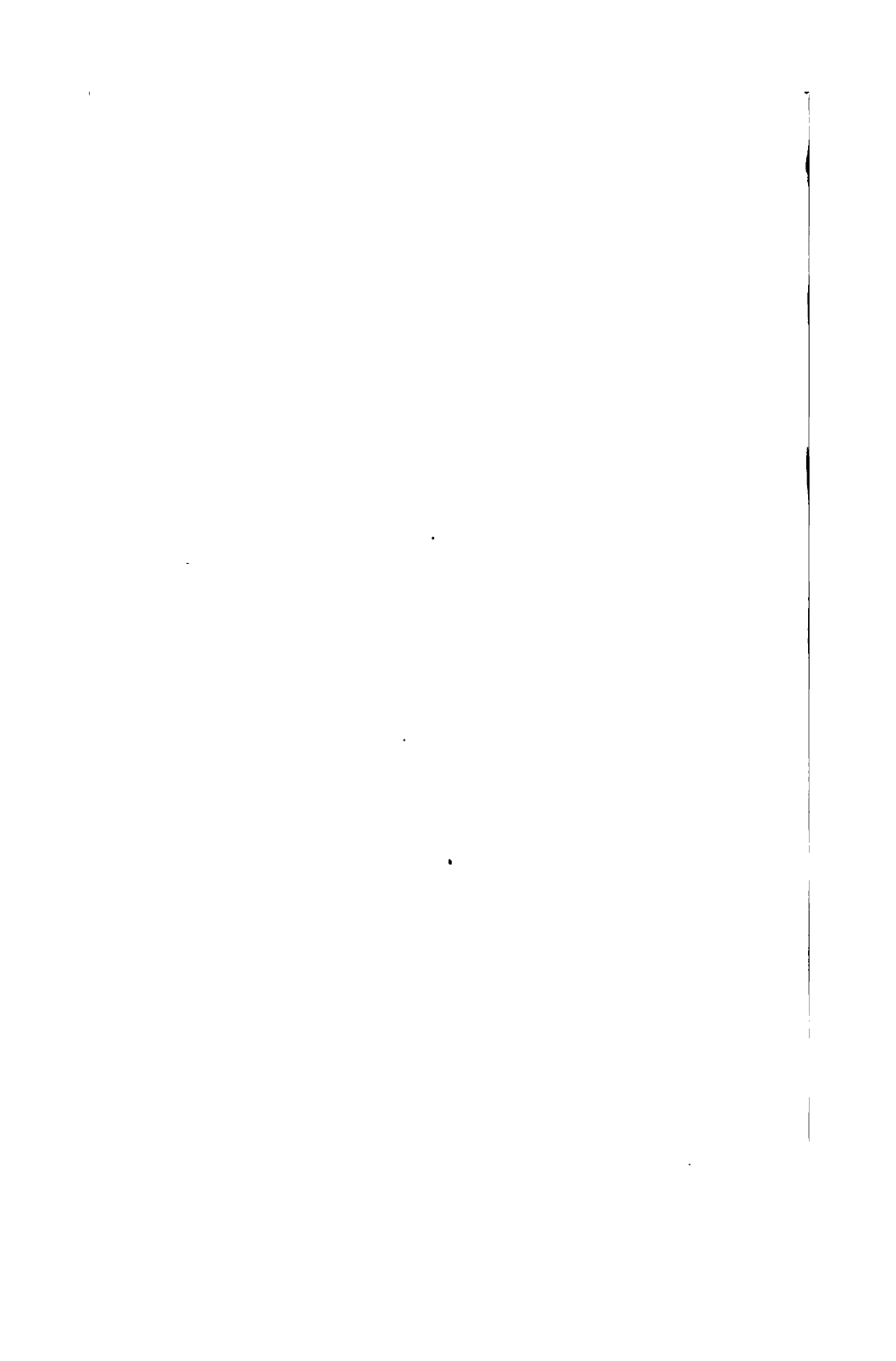
those graces which, in the loftiest and humblest, are the adornments of the Christian character.

5th. A further duty is—to try to reclaim, rather than discourage, those who have done wrong. St. Paul, we are assured, did not countenance Onesimus in his disgrace and dishonesty. He did not conceal from him the injustice he had committed by fleeing from his lawful master. Nay, he urges upon him that, in reparation of the wrong he has done, he must humbly return. But we cannot suppose that he discouraged him, and took all hope from him. That because he was guilty he would not listen to him, but angrily dismissed him as beyond the reach of forgiveness. Paul's was another spirit to this—he was too earnestly desirous “to comfort and help the weak-hearted; and to raise up them that had fallen.” Oh! if our Heavenly Master, each time we had grievously offended, had commanded the Cherub's flaming sword to flash in ruthless and unforgiving vengeance before us, which of us would now stand in his sight? Which of us would not long since have been consumed? But the Lord is gracious and long-suffering; he bears with us; he blots out our transgressions; he remembers not our old sins; he considers that we are but dust; and the hand of Mercy withholds the sword of Justice. And but

for this—that God gave us time for repentance and means of repentance—we should have been cut down long ago as cumberers of the ground. Let us be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful. Let not the first offence—let not one crime—let not one guilty action—bar the door of hope. Try what forgiveness will do. It is a conquest to reclaim, a victory to have turned one who has wronged us, “from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God;” a blessedness which no words can express, to have reclaimed an offending one from the error of his way—“thus saving his soul from death, and hiding a multitude of sins.” Many a character has been lost, and many a poor friendless, homeless girl driven to desperation, and greater crime, because some slight offence was visited with the most rigorous penalty; where forbearance, and reasoning, and mild, Christian expostulation, and forgiveness, would have given a quiet and chastened conscience to the offender; and to the offended the privilege of showing mercy.

It would be well if we had constantly before our minds, against our moments of harshness and unforgiving, our Lord’s parable of the two debtors, one of whom owed his lord ten thousand talents, and received upon entreaty the forgiveness

of the whole; yet evil intreated the other, *his* debtor, who owed him but one hundred pence. We are God's servants, but how unprofitable are we! How negligent in duty! How remiss in much which requires most earnest heed! What daily occasion have we to confess that "we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and left undone those which we ought to have done." Yet we receive kindness at God's hands, and forbearance, till his long-suffering leads us to repentance. And shall we be impetuous, and harsh, and unforgiving, with this very knowledge that we have a Master in Heaven who has forgiven us far greater things than we refuse to forgive in others? Shall we have persons daily with us, "that when we will we may do them good," and take no pains that they may know our common Master, to whom we must all one day give an account? Shall we make their service bitter, and to be performed with reluctance, when by kindness and with one encouraging word, they would do it cheerfully? Shall we have the example of a reclaimed slave made a profitable servant, and not strive, each in our appointed sphere, to "lighten one that is in darkness, and to convert one that is in sin?"



GENERAL CONCLUSION.

DESIGN OF THE GOSPEL.

"THIS IS THE RECORD, THAT GOD HATH GIVEN TO US ETERNAL LIFE, AND THIS LIFE IS IN HIS SON. HE THAT HATH THE SON HATH LIFE; AND HE THAT HATH NOT THE SON OF GOD HATH NOT LIFE. THESE THINGS HAVE I WRITTEN UNTO YOU THAT BELIEVE ON THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD; THAT YE MAY KNOW THAT YE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE, AND THAT YE MAY BELIEVE ON THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD."—1 John v. 11—13.

It is a solemn consideration that God has spoken, and that God still speaks to His creatures! High as the heavens are above the earth—far removed as the bright and holy Throne of the King of kings and Lord of lords is from this world which is His footstool—He who made us has not left Himself without a witness here. He has given us a clear declaration of His Will; how we are to walk so as to please Him; what we are to do to be saved; and how we may stand in the judgment. Yes! God has given us his testimony, and what a weighty responsibility rests upon us if we give not to it the most earnest heed! For:—"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is

greater: for this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth in the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God, hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." It is plain, then, why the Gospel has been preached to us; it is evident why the Scriptures have been revealed:—"They were written that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing we may have life through His name." Here, then, is the turning point for salvation. Here we must begin to work the works of God; for "This is the work of God, that ye *believe* on Him whom He hath sent."

To what, then, as a General Conclusion to these discourses illustrating the Gospel's power, can I more fitly and more solemnly call your attention, than to the necessity of receiving the "Record which God has given us of His Son?"—for this is clearly the whole *design of the Gospel*. It leads us to look unto Jesus, and believe in Him as the Christ the Son of God; and through that act of believing, which becomes to us as "the righteousness of

God," gives us a participation in that Life Eternal which is from Him and through Him. What is the end of our Faith? The Salvation of our Souls! What is the beginning of our Salvation? Faith!—"without which it is impossible to please God."

I know that, to some, it is a doctrine difficult to be received—that *we are thus to be saved by Grace through Faith*; but this doctrine will be cleared of much of its difficulty, if we consider that, in requiring us to live by Faith, God requires of us that we should receive His witness, and act upon it, as being infinitely greater than any witness of men. And hard to be understood as the doctrine of Justification by Faith at first appears, nothing seems simpler, if we reflect upon it, than that the great thing required of us by God should be a perfect belief and reliance in what He has said and done.

For if Faith were some undefined and unearthly exercise—if "living and acting by faith" were a practice quite strange to our ordinary experience, something in fact which we could not understand, then there would not be that awful announcement of condemnation against those that believe not—which we read in the Gospel—*they are condemned already*. But it is not so. "We are all our lives

acting on faith. We never transact any matter of business—we never go from one place to another—we never depend on any statement—but it is an act of Faith. For years past we have done many things, we have risked many things, we have laboured in many things.” And in all this our daily life has been one continued act of Faith. So that it is nothing strange of God to ask of us to act by Faith, and to live by Faith; for this, in a *general* sense, we have been accustomed to all our days. But there is something new in God’s demand in a *spiritual* sense. Faith in our ordinary actions has rested on the witness of *men*, but in the Faith which God requires of us, we are to act on the witness of *God*. It is as if God should say to us:—“You have listened to parents, to teachers, to friends, and acted upon their testimony—now *I* speak, receive my testimony. Your life has been a life of faith in worldly things—exercise as strong, if not stronger, Faith with regard to eternal things. You have been often moved with terror upon man’s report of danger; you have rejoiced when man has pronounced glad tidings. Now let your hopes and your fears, your joys and your sorrows, be moved by what God threatens or declares.” And what in fact can be more reasonable, than that if we will act by Faith

in what easily-deceived and easily-deceiving *man* declares, that we should act by Faith concerning what *God*, who cannot lie, declares. "For it is a principle that all will acknowledge, that the witness of God must be greater than that of men; that in acting on God's word, or God's promise, we must be acting on higher, firmer, surer ground, than in acting on man's word. Nay, this is so evident, that every one is not only ready to admit it—but the condemnation, both in respect of folly and of sin in preferring the witness of men to that of God, is so obvious, that no one is willing to take it to himself."¹

There are three things in the text which more especially claim our attention. 1st.—That we have a Record from God. 2nd.—What that Record is. "That He has given unto us Eternal Life." And 3rdly—Whence that Life is to be derived. "That Life is in His Son."

The 1st assertion of the Apostle which we have to consider, is—that we have a Record from God. *God has spoken to man.* Much as too many of us despise it, much as too many of us disbelieve it—God has *spoken unto us.* It is true, in His essen-

¹ The general argument of this paragraph, as well as the words quoted, are from "Notes of Sermons," by the Rev. J. M. Campbell.

tial glory and blessedness He is far removed from our sinful world ; by our sins, and iniquities, and enmity to Him, we have separated ourselves widely from Him ; guilt and unrighteousness have broken up the way of access, which, when our race was first created in holiness, existed between earth and heaven ; *yet still God has spoken* to us : in sundry times and divers manners ; at one time by angel visitants ; at other times by His prophets ; at other times by holy men, who spake as they were moved by His Holy Spirit. But in these last times, under our dispensation, under the Gospel, under the dispensation of grace, “He has spoken to us by His Son.” If we open our Bibles, whatever we read there is God’s Word. Whatever we hear from those sacred pages, we hear as God speaking to us. The testimony, the witness, which that Blessed Volume utters, is God’s testimony. It leaves no room for question or for doubt, *can* the things there written be true, *can* they ever be accomplished ? They *must* be true, they *must* be accomplished ; and we cannot doubt them, we cannot disbelieve them, without (oh ! we ought to tremble when we think of it) without making God a liar ! Let me, I pray you, press this upon your minds—all Revelation is God’s Record ; a record which can never pass away ; a record which no

lapse of ages can destroy; a record which no change in the opinions or circumstances of men can alter; a record which the breaking up of all we see around us cannot overthrow; a record which shall speak like terrible thunder amid the awful, the speechless silence, when the millions of our reäwakened race shall stand waiting their sentence before the judgment-seat of Christ. And according to this record we shall be judged—according to this, be acquitted or condemned.

And what is this Record? Not only a record of what *we* are and what *God* is—not only a record of what God requires of us—not only a record of His Covenant and His promises—not only of His being a God merciful and gracious, forgiving transgression, and iniquity, and sin—not only a record of what awaits us after death, and of the searching, scrutinizing Judge with whom we shall have to do—not only a record of the daily, the hourly blessings we receive from our Heavenly Father's hands, "life, and breath, and all things"—not only a record of His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering—not only a record of His seeing in secret, and being familiar with all we say, and act, and think, and conceive in the very depths of our hearts—but more than this, we have God's Record of Eternal Life, and that that Life

is in His Son. This is God's great Record. This is the most wondrous truth to which He has given us His testimony. This is the main point to which God calls our Faith. This is the Revelation which above all others it concerns us to believe, and to be convinced is true. This is the Record which if we believe we shall be saved—which if we deny or disbelieve we shall have the curse of God abiding on us:—"that God hath given to us *Eternal Life*; and that this *Life* is in His Son."

And this leads us, 2ndly, to consider—what is that *Eternal Life* of which God bears record? It is true that it includes in it a deliverance from death and hell! By sin not only came separation from God, and the forfeiture of Heaven—but also *death*, which includes as well the present destruction of the body, as the eternal destruction of both body and soul. This was man's desert—this was his sentence, "*dying thou shalt die.*" And it is for this that the great mass of persons in the world lying in wickedness are labouring—the wages they will yet receive, for "*the wages of sin is death.*" But God in the free gift of His Son, gave Him that "He might destroy death, and him that had the power of death," and translate us from the fear of death, to the hope of everlasting life! It is true, also, that the expression—*Eternal Life*,

comprehends the restoring of the soul to its lost spiritual life. The soul which is at enmity with God, a stranger to the Covenant of promise, without God and without hope in the world, is described as being *dead* in trespasses and sins; and when that soul is brought by the Spirit of God to the knowledge of the truth, and to the enjoyment of the grace of God, it is said to be quickened or raised to life again. It partakes of a new spiritual existence—it lives to God—it delights in Him—a Divine life is implanted, in which it increases and strengthens; in fact, to use a Scripture phrase, it is “alive unto God through Jesus Christ!”

But deliverance from death, or the enjoyment of a new spiritual life, or the prospect of mere rescue from condemnation, or the admission even into the happy regions of the blessed, is not all that is included in God’s gift of Eternal Life. Oh! there is infinitely more than this held out to us in this gracious gift. It would have been much indeed, if God had merely rescued us from misery! It would have been much indeed, if the Redeemer had only visited our sin-accursed world, and by some way of wisdom and mercy repealed the sentence which doomed us to eternal torments. It would have been much indeed, if we had been restored merely to enjoy, with the lowest rank

of angels, the most distant gaze of the Eternal and the Blessed God. But beyond all this, infinitely beyond all this, must our wonder be raised. In giving us eternal life, God promises—what we dare not doubt, but cannot understand—He promises to us, what the most spiritualized imagination cannot in the most distant manner soar to—He promises to us not a crown merely, not only a region incorruptible, not only to pass eternity with an innumerable company of angels—but that “when Christ appears we shall be like Him”—that we shall live with Him and reign with Him—that we shall be partakers of the Divine Nature—that we shall be glorified with the glory of the Son of God—that our peace shall be the peace of God that passeth understanding—that our joy shall be the joy of the Lord, and that we shall drink of the river of God’s own pleasures—in a word, that we shall be “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.” Oh! this is the record that God has given of Eternal Life! This is the gift, the wondrous, the gracious gift He has bestowed on us, not only that we should be called the sons of God, but that in glory, in blessedness, in the participation of the Divine Nature, and of holiness, we should be “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ!”

But we pass on to the next point, to consider—

Whence this life is to be derived. Our text informs us—"this life is in His Son;" and if we review what is comprehended in eternal life, we shall in some measure be led to see in what manner this life is in the Son of God. I have already said that man was not only separated by sin from God, but that he forfeited his inheritance, he forfeited Heaven. He forfeited a blessed Immortality, and brought himself under the sentence of death temporal and eternal. So that Christ, in giving us life, must first redeem and ransom us from that curse and condemnation under whose load man was so sunk, that he could not look up to Heaven. And this we find Christ doing for us. In humbling himself and taking our nature upon Him, Christ came as our deliverer. Whatever He did, whatever He suffered, was to redeem us. When He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, when He entered into the most bitter lot of human miseries—when He suffered hunger and thirst and fatigue—when He was despised and rejected of men—when He was sold, betrayed, denied, and dragged ruthlessly from scene to scene, from judgment-hall to judgment-hall, as the very scorn and derision of men, and the outcast of the people—when He was mocked, scourged, and crowned—when He was robed and spit upon and set at

nought of Herod's rude soldiery—when he went forth with feeble step and bleeding shoulder bearing His Cross—when His hands and His feet were torn and mangled, and His suffering body racked to fit the tree; when He endured, high and lifted up, in agonies, the mocking of the people, the crushing weight of our sins; and, more than all, the outpouring wrath of God and the hiding of his Father's face—in a word, when He groaned in Spirit, when He cried with a loud voice "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," and when He poured out His soul unto death—in each and all these stages of suffering, this treading the wine-press alone, He was paying down our ransom—He was atoning for the sins of the world—He was bearing in His own body our sentence—He was "tasting death for every man," that having drained Himself the cup of wrath and Hell, He might hold out to us the cup of Life and Immortality. So that, in this sense, Eternal Life is in Christ Jesus.

But, in a further sense, Eternal Life is ours in Christ. In the great work of restoring us, Christ has not only so atoned as to deliver us from eternal wrath, but He has also made provision that the lost image of God should be restored to us. We go infinitely below the true estimate of the Redeemer's

Work, if we only look at it as staying the condemnation of God, which was ready to be poured upon us. Christ came to purchase us—to purchase us unto Himself; to restore us not only to reconciliation, but to holiness—to confer upon us not only protection as God's redeemed creatures, but to confer upon us incalculably beyond this—the adoption of sons! And if so, it is clear that something, which we have not by nature—something, which we cannot possibly obtain of ourselves, must be conferred upon us. And this is the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God is to quicken us; the Spirit of God is to dwell in us, and walk in us; the Spirit of God is to take away the sinful heart, and gradually to pull down the sinful nature, and fashion us according to the image of God's dear Son, and make us partakers of the Divine Nature. But all this, though the Divine Spirit's work, is obtained for us through Christ Jesus. It is a part of that Eternal Life which He bestowed upon us! Because Christ has purchased us as His people, God bestows upon us His Spirit to enable us to be His people.

But, in its *fullest* sense, Eternal Life is ours in Christ Jesus. Christ, as He is God, is the Infinite, the Blessed, the Eternal, in whom not only *we* live, and move, and have our being, but all things

that exist; even the angels, great in power, live through Him. To them, as to us, He is the Source of being. *He is life, and life is in Him.* That eternal life, then, which is the gift of God, is not merely our being brought into a state in which we cannot die—for in that state we are and always must be—our souls, as they are the breath of God, *cannot* die. Nor is eternal life our being merely removed from earth to Heaven. Nor is it merely to be in the company of blessed and shining beings, who cannot sin. The eternal life which is the gift of God, is to be derived through every moment of eternity from God Himself, and from Christ who is God. It is to be near Him; to behold His glory; to see Him as He is; to partake of His glory by gazing on Him; to partake of His Holiness; to partake of His Blessedness; to partake of that *Eternal Life* which is in Him, and flows from Him. In Heaven, God is all and in all. He will be our life; He will be our blessedness; He will be our glory; He will be our light; He will be our inheritance!

But let me bring this subject before you in its practical bearings. The great point we have to learn from it is—that God has given us a Record, to which He requires our full and firm belief. After granting us the strongest testimony, He calls

upon us, as we give heed to and act upon the witness of men, to heed and act upon the witness of God, which is firmer and greater than any witness of men. But what is that record which God has given, and requires us to receive? Let me again remind you that this is the record, "that God hath given us eternal life, and that this Life is in His Son." Now we read in the verse preceding our text, that "he that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself;" that is, he that believes this testimony, hath it in himself; and he that hath the testimony in himself, hath the Son, and He that hath the Son hath life. So that the great question is, How do we receive God's Record? What weight has it upon our belief? To what extent do we receive it? If the subject before us says anything at all, it says plainly that we must fully believe God's Record, and believing this, believe in Him of whom that is spoken; or else that we make God a liar. I urge your particular attention to this. God has given us a Record of His Son. It leaves, as I have said, no room for doubt; no room for unbelief. We must believe it if we will be saved, and if we believe it not, we not only make God a liar, but the Gospel declares we are condemned already. Oh! then, guard against an evil heart of unbelief. It is this which deprives so many

of us of the comforts of the Gospel. It is this, which keeps the Son of God from dwelling in our hearts. It is this, which hinders us from enjoying, even in foretaste, the eternal life which God has given to all who will receive it. God has spoken unto us. He has declared such and such things, He has made such and such promises; He has testified to us, that sinful as we are, and far gone from Him as we are, that there is eternal life for us, and that that life is through Him whom God hath set forth to be the Saviour of the world. And yet thousands of us will not receive God's Word for this—we will not receive it so as to be interested in it above all things—we will not receive God's wonderful and free gift. Though in almost everything we receive the witness of men, we will not receive the witness of God which is greater! Let me ask, is this the case with any of you? By unbelief, by hardness of heart, by carelessness, by continuing in sin, by your disregard for the Son of God, by your extreme love of the world, by your indifference about salvation, do you prove against yourselves that you do not receive God's Record? that though He has testified of eternal life, that you will not seek for it? though He has plainly said that that life is in His Son, that you will not go unto Him that you may have life? You may really be in this case and think

it is not sin. You may be flattering yourself, and thanking God, with the Pharisee, that you are not as other men—but still if this *be* your case, if you receive not God's Record, if His testimony be not in you, you are guilty of the most condemning sin; you are guilty of the sin which will be the great test at the day of judgment; you are guilty of the sin for which lost millions will for ever accuse themselves in the regions of torment; you are guilty of making God a liar, by not believing the Record He has given us of His Son. Oh! we should shudder at the prospective history of the heart of unbelief. It has no part in that Eternal Life of which God has borne record. It has no hope set before it to take sadness from life, or fear from death, or terror from the judgment. It has no part in the inheritance which the eye of Faith only sees, and the heart of Faith only enjoys. It is condemned already; it carries its curse within itself, and its sentence too:—"For He that believeth not God's Record, believeth not on the Son of God; and he that believeth not on the Son of God shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Brethren, called by the holy name of Christians, baptized into the promise to believe God's record of His Son, could we but apprehend in the smallest

measure what the gift is which God has bestowed upon us; could we enter into the very faintest notion of the greatness, the blessedness, the exaltedness, which eternal life embraces; could we, in any degree, conceive the love of God in giving us His Son, and all things through Him, we should be amazed, we should be lost at the folly, the madness, of *heeding* not the Record, and *believing* not the Record which God has given us of Eternal Life. Were we capable of the irrepressible wonder of the Apostles, when one exclaimed—"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God!" and the other—"God *so* loved the world!" then should we be earnest, as they were, "to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord." Had Christ not come and spoken to us; had God the Father vouchsafed to us no record; had sin not been put away, by the one eternal atonement, we "had not had sin: but now we have no cloke for our sin." There is a Father waiting to be gracious. There is an eternal redemption obtained. There is grace sufficient promised. There is an inheritance reserved in heaven. And can we despise these? Can we reject them? Can we be indifferent to them? Then how emphatically does the Apostle's solemn language

concern us :—"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses : of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" Oh! I pray you, then, search your hearts, prove your faith, make full trial of what you profess. Ask, and ask seriously, do I, or do I not, believe the Record which God has given, that there is Eternal Life in His Son? And, be solemnly assured, if you do not receive it, all is yet at stake with you; you are not at peace, you cannot be—your own conscience tells you, you cannot; for it is impossible that there should be peace and condemnation in one and the same heart—since "he that believeth not is condemned already." Earnestly do I pray that He who has given you the record, may give you hearts to receive it, and bestow the witness of His Spirit to abide within you, that "ye may know ye have eternal life;" and realize the unspeakable blessedness of the Apostle's assurance :—"There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Then shall "the Gospel" be to you, indeed, "the power of God unto salvation;" and that witness of God, which to the unbelieving is a "savour

of death unto death," shall be to you, in its convincing influence, and comforting power, a "savour of life unto life."



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